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Preface

This document was created to compile all *Kingdom Hearts* Ultimania interviews and other sources relating to *Kingdom Hearts* to store and archive them for easy access and searchability. The aim is to provide a centralized document for both academic and fan research. All translators and creators are being credited throughout the document and in the References section separately. In addition, links have been archived using the Internet Archive to ensure future accessibility.

The content of the sources has been altered and standardized to increase readability and support academic usability (Times New Roman, 12pt, justify). All sources use the APA 7th edition formatting wherever possible. Citations refer to translations/webpages and their respective authors, not the original *Ultimania* guides themselves, as these are, to the author's knowledge, not referenced other than by name and only available in Japanese. Therefore, providing direct references and exact page numbers is currently not possible, but may be added in the future.

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The original interviews were published by Square Enix in Japanese-language *Ultimania* guides. All translations included here are unofficial fan efforts. Should any content be misattributed, uncredited, or if you would like to contribute to the archive, please contact the document owner.

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Special thanks to u/ZeroSora for providing the original list this project is based on. [Archived Comment]

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Nomura Interview

Part 1: Project and Character

"I hardly think 'This is impossible so I'll quit.'"

Kingdom Hearts director: Tetsuya Nomura interview

This is an end of the book interview with the director Tetsuya Nomura, who had a large hand in the creation of the book. This will be the longest interview in this ULTIMANIA book.

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PROJECT: In the Beginning, It Was a "Solo Team"

---Around what time did planning for a Disney collaboration begin?

Nomura: The producer Hashimoto (Square Co., Ltd. Business administrator: Shinji Hashimoto) was speaking to a person from Disney. Coincidentally, I was in the same place talking to Mr. Sakaguchi (Executive Producer: Hironobu Sakaguchi) about what kind of game to make. "I want to make an action game with stylized characters," I remember vaguely thinking to myself at that time. I offered my hand and said, "If that's the case, since I have an idea I want to do, please let me do this." The person from Disney was in on the idea and said, "Since it's stylized, it would be best if there are Disney characters that are known world-wide." It was a great opportunity, as if it was destined.

---This was your first time demonstrating your prowess as the role of a director. What was it like to try out directing?

Nomura: In the beginning I didn't want to do it because I knew it was difficult. (laugh) When I offered to do a Disney game, there was no team. It turned out I would do the planning myself and talk it over with Disney.

---You were a "solo team" in the beginning?

Nomura: I was a one man team for a year. (laugh) I began after FFVIII.

---You were different from other directors because you had to give directions while drawing. Was it hard to hold two positions at the same time?

Nomura: I thought from the beginning that there would be places where I couldn't touch upon while I drew. In order to settle that, I made sure to gather excellent leaders. I believed

that if I left the rest up to trustworthy people, than I don't have to spend time giving direction for the small, fine details. It was still tough while I drew pictures, but I think it worked out. Normally when the drawing job becomes tough because of the schedule, it is the director's role to push the artist to get the job done and say, "The drawings are not finished?" But there were times when I myself would be late, and troublesome situations arose. I would make subtle changes to the schedule. (laugh)

---Is the finished product what you had in mind from the beginning?

Nomura: Yes, just what I thought and drew out.

---In terms of the game, which part did you spend the longest time on?

Nomura: I guess it would be, "What makes this game interesting?" Even though lately hardware has evolved and the appearance looks more and more amazing, I felt that nothing was interesting at first glance, or felt fresh. I thought that if you were to compare the improvement of image quality, there wasn't enough of a feeling of newness or exhilaration. That is why I wanted to make a game that had various elements that were immediately interesting and enjoyable to play.

---If you were to think of the Disney games up till now, there were times when other people thought that you would not be granted permission. You were planning to do things such as creating worlds from multiple works and remaking a large number of characters completely in 3D. Was it difficult to negotiate?

Nomura: I hardly think, "This is impossible so I'll quit." I think, "I'll just see what happens, and if it's no good, then I'll give up." Even though in the beginning people expressed their disapproval, I did it by thinking there was nothing that couldn't be persuaded.

---I think it went well if you were able to create a project where all the Disney princesses appear in the same place.

"I wanted to make a game that was immediately interesting."

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Nomura: At first, I wanted to put in a scene where all of the princesses would be captured in Hollow Bastion and then each of their respective princes will come and save them. That idea was rejected but I was at least able to keep the part with the princesses.

---Did you choose which Disney worlds you wanted to put in?

Nomura: In the beginning when I was working alone, I had a fair number of world choices in mind. If I were to add the original worlds, there was over twenty. In the end, I spoke with the staff and cut a few here and there, and ended up with the number it is now.

---In what order did you choose them?

Nomura: Well, I guess the first priority is its popularity. I chose in the order of how well known it was. Then I chose by figuring out if there are characters that are fun to move around, and, in terms of staging, if there were places that were interesting to be a part in.

---By the way, is there a reason why Disney's symbol character mickey Mouse only appeared in one scene in the game?

Nomura: Actually, according to the contract, I was only able to have one cutscene with him somewhere in the game. I thought deeply about which cutscene to put him in.

---So you had that sort of limitation? If that is so, you really made an effective choice.

Nomura: Disney gave me permission to put him in a role where he can be waving his hand from behind a town's crowd. However, I thought that if I were to do this, I would use him in a way that would give the greatest impact. I thought, "He has to be here" and used him in that scene.

<u>CHARACTER: Final Fantasy Character's Episode</u>

---With what priorities in mind did you choose the characters from the Final Fantasy series?

Nomura: I ended up with more Final Fantasy characters than I thought. At first I planned that there would be less. Well, as I kept making the story, I thought about which characters to put in each role, and there were many places where Disney characters would not fit in. For example, I couldn't think of any Disney characters to put in as the Destiny Island children. When I thought about which character would guide Sora in Traverse Town, nothing struck me. Then I thought I should just make new characters, but they would just show up once in awhile and they would not be as appealing as the Disney characters around them. Since that was the case, I came upon the idea of using Final Fantasy characters to choose which characters that would fit the roles. When it came to choosing who would be the swordsman who guides Sora, I believed that Squall fit the role the best.

---I digress, but Squall called himself Leon when he appeared... Squall Leonhart's "heartless"... in other words, does Leon come from taking out "hart", or "heart", from Leonhart?

Nomura: Ah, that's a deep reading into it, but that's not what I meant. (laugh). In Disney Castle, if people saw in the beginning that "Meet Squall" was written in the letter, people would have an image of Squall in their head and the impact of the first meeting would be weak. Then Akiyama (Event Planning Director: Jun Akiyama) told me that he wanted to change only Squall's name. We decided that we would take the last part of his name.

---The red wing pattern in Squall's back is based off of Rinoa's image, isn't it?

Nomura: That's right. Well, there is a reason why Leon rejects being called Squall. I added Rinoa's wings to imply something definitely happened in the past.

---You did not plan to have Rinoa to appear?

"I don't want to conclude who Cloud is searching for."

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Nomura: Rinoa didn't appear, huh. (strained laugh) I thought personally, Rinoa was different from the other characters that I imagined in FFVIII and her personality was hard to grasp.

---Also, moving on to Cloud, the left half of his design was based off of Vincent from FFVII?

Nomura: Yes, his left arm is based off of Vincent. Cloud was meant to be a character that is leaning towards the darkness, so I wanted to make him demon-like. Vincent was created to be that way so I thought of adding that on. I wanted Vincent to have an appearance though.

---I want to ask about Cloud from a setting standpoint. Is his hometown Hollow Bastion?

Nomura: In terms of Kingdom Hearts, it is that for now.

---If that is so, does that mean when Cid escaped with the other members from Hollow Bastion, Cloud was left behind?

Nomura: No, he was not left behind just because he strayed from the others during the commotion. (laugh) Cid and the others were able to escape from the mayhem.

---Then is the person Cloud searching for Aerith?

Nomura: I wonder. If that person was Aerith, then that means one question was answered by the ending. You can take it as that. Since Cloud is a popular character, I don't want to make this type of conclusion. The opinions of the players are stronger, so I want to give room for speculation.

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raseth. (2010, December 18). *KH Ultimania - Nomura Interview (part 1)*. LiveJournal. https://kh-ultimania.livejournal.com/2479.html [Archived: https://web.archive.org/web/20250716084416/https://kh-ultimania.livejournal.com/2479.html].

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Part 2: Sound and Naming

SOUND: Inside Story on "Hikari"'s Creation

---I would like to ask about the main theme song "Hikari". Was it your intention to choose Utada Hikaru?

Nomura: Yes.

---I bet you still can't fathom how you persuaded Hikaru Utada to agree to making a song for a videogame,

Nomura: That's true. But I didn't think it was impossible, of course. If you don't try, you won't know. The others around me said, "It's better to stop, she'll definitely turn that down," and just convincing the other staff took the most time. I insisted from the beginning that the singer must be Hikaru Utada.

---How were the actual negotiations once you started?

Nomura: The decision was unexpectedly smooth. Her people agreed to the first negotiation and it was not bad. They replied saying something like, "She likes games, so it might be alright." They also added that she likes Disney. I was told that since she is coming back from Japan, I can talk with her directly. When I was allowed one more negotiation with her after she returned, she asked if I could show what the game was. I quickly sent her a presentation video. Then in a day or two, she said, "I'll go for it" and that she will strongly consider it. I said, "Seriously?!"

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I was extremely surprised that came out of my own mouth. (laugh)

---What kind of song did you ask for from Hikaru Utada?

Nomura: The song would play with the ending sequence where the hero and heroine part from each other since the images for that scene were decided very early on. However, I wanted to show that this is not a sorrowful parting but an optimistic one. The lyrics fit so perfectly that when I first heard it, I trembled and couldn't speak. I did ask her to not put in words that do not exist in the game's worlds, such as "cellphone", but she added in "television". (laugh) But I am glad that even from that, one can take away a deep meaning.

--- The Hikari single did splendidly and became #1 in the hit charts and matched up with the sale of the game. It was nice that both of them benefited from each other.

Nomura: That's right. Well, I think I was bothersome in some ways. (strained laugh)

NAMING: Theme of Building One's Own Land

--When did you decide on the title "Kingdom Hearts"?

Nomura: I decided from the beginning that the title would have "Kingdom". That has several different meanings; first I wanted something that sounded like Disney... like "Magic Kingdom" or "Animal Kingdom" since Disney has that "kingdom" image. Also, I wanted the meaning to be deep to an extent. Something not to be taken lightly. Then, since this was a newly created team.... this is not a sequel but a project that was built up from a vacant land, so there is an image of us creating our own country. I wanted to use it because of all those meanings behind "Kingdom", but we couldn't use it.

---The registered trademark... you mean?

Nomura: Yes. Since it was already a registered trademark, I was troubled and kept thinking of different names to use. But when everybody thought about it together, we only came up with silly ideas. "Kingdom Champion", shortened to "Kinchan". (laugh) In the end, I wanted the story to have heart as the theme, so I thought about using "heart" in the title. But the sound of "Kingdom Heart" did not flow well, so I thought "Kingdom Hearts" would be good.

---Moving on, I would like to talk about the main characters' names; Sora, Riku, and Kairi. Your characters always have very memorable names. In the Final Fantasy series, Cloud (FFVII), Squall (VIII), and Tidus (X) were all named after weather and such.

Nomura: Ah, Nojima (FFX Scenario Writer: Kazushige Nojima) named Tidus. I guess Nojima just wanted to go with the pattern. Because it just matched up out of coincidence, I didn't notice that at all. Since I named Sora, Riku, and Kairi after the three elements that make up the world, I didn't name Sora with weather in mind.

---Kairi was the only one that was not named "Kai" (means "ocean" in Japanese) and instead had "ri" attached at the end. Why?

Nomura: I thought Kai was not feminine enough, so I wondered what would be good. I tried attaching Japanese syllables starting from "a", and I thought Kairi fit the best.

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"Will Sora, Riku, and Kairi appear in a Disney movie? I guess I can't say that's impossible."

---I am just curious, but are Sora, Riku, and Kairi treated as Disney characters?

Nomura: Yes.

---Does that mean that those three can appear in a Disney movie or some other sort of development like that?

Nomura: That's right. I guess I can't say that's impossible. I can't say anything specific though. (laugh)

pg. 533

raseth. (2010, December 22). *KH Ultimania - Nomura Interview (part 2)*. LiveJournal. https://kh-ultimania.livejournal.com/3247.html [Archived: https://web.archive.org/web/20250716084615/https://kh-ultimania.livejournal.com/3247.html].

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Part 3: Kingdom Heart's Scenario Mysteries

Ask Tetsu-san!

Kingdom Hearts Scenario Mysteries

The following is an interview with Mr. Nomura about parts of the story with a couple of mysteries left behind. If you read this, you will definitely understand the Kingdom Hearts story more deeply than before!

---Mr. Nomura, in this game's story, what did you want to illustrate the most?

Nomura: As a story, I wanted to illustrate "bonds"... I wanted to show that the connections between people are not physical. Well, I think that it was thoroughly incorporated. Even when separated, things that are connected will still be connected.

---When I heard that this was going to be a Disney game, I imagined that the story would be more simple, but in actuality it was a story that players can imagine different things.

Nomura: Ah, I was going to focus on the game's playfulness and keep the story simple. I thought of Disney's target age group and talked about avoiding a complicated story. However, once the project started to come together, Mr. Sakamoto said if we don't aim for the Final Fantasy fan group, this project is going to fail. Well, I knew that even without him saying it. Then, the game's core... as for the playful part it still was kept the same, but the story was changed a lot. At the very beginning, the story was meant to be extremely simple. I thought of restricting it to ending after you defeat Maleficent, without the existence of Ansem..

---Then I would like to ask several questions about the story you changed. First, was Kairi's arrival to Destiny Islands a coincidence or fate?

Nomura: It's both. I was not able to illustrate it in the story itself. It is a delicate subject whether or not it is okay to talk about her life situation, but Ansem himself sent out Kairi from Hollow Bastion.

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The reason why he sent out Kairi was to find the Keyblade. In the End of the The World's prison, there is a is evidence that is left behind. Ansem believed that the young princess would end up where the Keyblade was no matter what. Thus the event of Kairi joining Sora and Riku is a coincidence and fate.

---Does that mean there are other Keyblade masters?

Nomura: Well, there are other Keyblade masters, but coincidentally for now, Kairi happened to arrive to the world Riku and Sora are in.

---Even though Riku was the rightful owner of the Keyblade, then why did Sora obtain the Keyblade in the beginning?

Nomura: Even though I would like to keep that obscure, there is a scene in Destiny islands where Riku is being swallowed by darkness, a light appears, and Sora first obtains the keyblade. With the setting I created, the darkness that surrounds them is Riku's heart's darkness. At that moment, Sora enters the darkness, and the light he sees inside is Riku's heart's light. Sora, who was squirming in the darkness to save Riku, touched the light and temporarily obtained the Keyblade from Riku.

---Does not the Keyblade itself choose its owner?

Nomura: The Keyblade reacts to the rightful owner's heart and appears to them. Even though it was definitely Riku who called the Keyblade towards him, the reason why Sora was able to weild it was because he also had the right qualities too.

---Also, I would like to talk about the nuance about what Kairi's grandmother told her: "The world was destroyed once, but it was revived thanks to the strength of the childrens' light." Does that "world that was born again through the power of light" have to do with each of the worlds in the game?

Nomura: Yes. Only, that wasn't told as a historical story, but a fairytale. The story is not the world's history, pretty much. It only overlaps to some extent.

---When you look at the World Prison's computer, there is a message with profound meaning. "The two will shut the door to darkness" was written, but who are you specifically suggesting are "the two"?

Nomura: Well, one of them is definitely Sora. There are multiple choices for the other one. He can be Riku or the King. Also, the "two keys" can also mean Sora's and the King's keys, or Sora and Riku

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The Message in the World Prison's Computer

Oh, born from hearts, children of darkness lacking hearts

Consume all the worlds and create the "End of the World"

Collect all the hearts, and complete the single great heart.

All hearts that became one. The one heart that became all.

In other words, the kingdom of hearts, "Kingdom Hearts"

That is the great heart. It conceals the great darkness.
Children of darkness, now return to the one darkness that seals the light
The strength of the heart devoid of darkness will open “Kingdom Hearts”.
There are seven hearts that lack darkness in the world. The seven are the keyhole and the key.
There are two who will close the door to darkness. Two keys will close the door.
The door to darkness that seals the light. The door that beings of the light cannot pass.
Only darkness that is born from darkness can pass through. Towards the center of the heart’s darkness.
Oh, born from hearts, children of darkness lacking hearts.
Until the door of darkness opens, devour every single heart!

Official NA Translation:
Ones born of the heart and darkness, devoid of hearts, ravage all worlds and bring desolation.
Seize all hearts and consummate the great heart.
All hearts to be one, one heart to encompass all.
Realize the destiny: the realm of Kingdom Hearts.
The great darkness sealed within the great heart.
Progeny of darkness, come back to the eternal darkness.
For the heart of light shall unseal the path.
Seven hearts, one Keyhole, one key to the door.
The door of darkness, tied by two keys.
The door to darkness to seal the light.
None shall pass but shadows, returning to the darkness.
One born of the heart and darkness, hunger for every heart until the dark door opens.
Source: http://kingdomhearts.wikia.com/wiki/World_Terminus

---After everything is done, Kairi is left on Destiny Islands, but why did she not go back to Hollow Bastion?

Nomura: Yes. I’m going to be a little blunt here, but I said within the book the reason why. The princesses told Sora, “We will be able to return to our respective worlds before they disappeared.” Kairi disappeared from Destiny Islands, so she returned there. Since she was physically moved from Hollow Bastion to Destiny Islands, she did not disappear from there.

---In the ending, why were Riku and the King on the other side of the door?

Nomura: In the King's case, he was on the other side from the beginning. The reason why the King disappeared was because in search for one of the two keys, he went to the other side of the world. He had an adventure unfold just like Sora, and he obtained the key and ended up there.

In Riku's case, his body was stolen by Ansem, so that means Riku's heart was not in this realm anymore. As you saw on the other side of the door, it is darkness. And that side of the world, in other words, in the end Riku's heart went to the world of darkness just like Ansem said. Then

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when Ansem disappears and Riku's body returns to him, he stayed in the world of darkness.

---Then, why didn't Riku go back to the other side of the door to this realm once he got back his body?

Nomura: Various people ask me that as well, but it was clearly written in the World Prison's computer. It said that only darkness can pass through that door. Riku and the King are not beings of darkness, so that is why they could not go through the door.

---If that is so, the reason why those two are on the other side of a door they cannot pass... Riku went to the other side once he combined with Ansem. Since the King is there as well, does that mean there is another place where you can enter into the world of darkness without using that door?

Nomura: Yes. The last words he left behind were "find the door to light". In other words, he was saying find the door, other than the door that allows darkness to come and go, that allows light to come and go.

---In the end of the ending, Pluto has the King's letter. Is that implying that the King returned through the door of light?

Nomura: I will leave that up to your imagination. I'll tell you one thing. In the beginning in Traverse Town, after Goofy said, "Pluto, we're going," Pluto was not present. Actually, between when he first disappears and then appears again in the ending, he met with the King. The reason why Pluto perked up in Traverse Town was because he felt the King's presence.

---Which worlds did Pluto travel when he had that letter?

Nomura: I can say that he appeared in worlds that do not appear in the game.... well, other than the current worlds, there are other worlds that the Heartless erased. The End of the World did not exist at first and is a world that is made up of erased worlds put together. Also, there is that place the door to Kingdom Hearts appears. At first that was another world, so

that means that Sora and the others are now residing in that world which returned to what it once was.

---So does that mean the reason why Pluto was there was because in that place, "that" or that person.....

Nomura: I hope the story from then on would be revealed one day.

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raseth. (2010, December 22). *KH Ultimania - Nomura Interview (part 3)*. LiveJournal. https://kh-ultimania.livejournal.com/3508.html [Archived: https://web.archive.org/web/20250716084801/https://kh-ultimania.livejournal.com/3508.html].

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Part 4: Secret and Message sections

Archive Author's Note: The original post called this "Part 3" in the subheading. For the time being and unless challenged, for the sake of this document and searchability, it is called "Part 4".

—

SECRET: Who are the Three People in the Secret Ending?

--- I believe the question on people's minds who fulfilled certain requirements and finished the game... I would normally think that the three people in the secret ending (pg. 474) are Sora, Riku, and Kairi, but who are they really? [Translator's Note: **"Another Side, Another Story"** was the only secret ending the Japanese release had. The second secret ending video "**Deep Dive"** (more specifically, Another Side, Another Story【deep dive】) was added on to the American release and the Final Mix release.]

Nomura: Hmmm, is that so? I wonder if it's okay for me to say it. Well, there are several different meanings behind that... of course, there is also the image that comes after that. In the beginning, there are the words "Another Side, Another story" . You can interpret that saying this is a different story. Well, since everybody is having fun guessing who they are, I worry about revealing information.

---This book will be published in around six months.

Nomura: If that's the case, I guess I can say a little bit. Well, Riku is one of them.

---Riku is there... then, who are the other two?

Nomura: I want to stop revealing if the other two are really Kairi or Sora. If there really is going to be a continuation, then I would like not to reveal any more about the clip since it will actually have to do with the sequel. If enough people demand for it, then it might be revealed in the form of a sequel.

---In the secret ending, there is an avalanche of words. Does that mean that you have the continuation of the story clearly in your head?

Nomura: For now, yes. Hmmm, I wonder how much I should reveal. All I can say is that if there is a sequel, I want to have Ansem appear. Speaking of which, Ansem in the end, lost his body. That means that you can't really say that the Ansem that appears in the end is Ansem's true body. It's a form that he took on after borrowing Riku's body. Saying that, the existence of the robed man in the beginning is suspicious. There are several ways of interpreting it. Well, setting aside whether I'm doing that or not, I've been thinking about several ideas for the development after that.

---If there is a sequel, does that mean Final Fantasy characters like Cloud will appear?

Nomura: Yes. If there will be a sequel, I want Cloud in it. Actually, in the overseas version of Kingdom Hearts, _____ is _____. [Translator's Note: He is referring to Sephiroth's fight. I assume he is saying something along the lines of, "Sephiroth is participating in the Coliseum." Sephiroth was not in the original Japanese release. He was only added in the American release and the Final Mix release.]

---Ooooh!

Nomura: That is why this time, I want to expand on Cloud's story and such.

---That means the overseas version is not exactly the same?

Nomura: There are many components added into the Plus Alpha. For example _____ was added. [Translator's Note: He is still referring to Sephiroth.] In the local version, the design was finalized and the polygon model was created, but we had to cut it out because of the time constraints. We revived it in this version. Since my staff never became so immersed in a game before, many of them said, "I want to fight a strong enemy!" Various suggestions were taken into consideration, as much tuning and additions were feasibly added under time constraints, and certain parts that we were bothered about were improved.

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---On top of that, the original Disney voice actors will be in the NA version?

Nomura: Yes, the Disney voice actors are definitely splendid, but there are many good voice actors for the original characters as well. For example, Sora's voice is done by Haley (Haley Joel Osment: main works are "Six Sense" and "A.I"). There are actors from dramas and singers that are popular overseas that are voicing as well.

---If that is the case, wouldn't the fans be overjoyed if there was a "Kingdom Hearts International"?

Nomura: Personally, I would like to release the overseas version for the Japanese PS2, but I also feel that having "international" in the title is a bit dishonest. It's a delicate subject. I already had talks about if it were to come out, I would have it say "English dub version" instead of "international". (laugh)

<u>MESSAGE: To the people who played this game</u>

---This time around, you've been drawing the Donald and Goofy illustrations, haven't you? On that subject, with Disney's sacred-like image, how was illustrating?

Nomura: No, I didn't draw them from start to finish. With this "tight-pencil" technique I do the rough draft first of all then I pass it off to a Disney person. There, a disney designer draws

and sends over a character. Then after all that, I draw it once more. This is how it's done and I don't change their corrections that much.

---Were the Atlantica and Halloweentown Donald and Goofy designs also done by a person at Disney?

Nomura: No, I did those too. Particularly, the Halloweentown Donald and Goofy I drew completely from the beginning.

---If I were to think about it, the uniting of Disney and Square characters which everyone thought was unreasonable, arranging and drawing Disney's characters together, and appointing Utada Hikaru, you made everything everybody thought was impossible come true.

Nomura: That's right. I'm always talking with everyone about that. We say things like everything came true like a dream. Thankfully, I didn't quit from the beginning.

---The game's sales have been promising, and it seems like the voice of people who want a sequel is growing.

Nomura: People tell me I did a great job. I've been thinking about it since the company has been pushing me to tell them what I'll be doing next. I want to do three or four. One of them is the sequel of course, but I am still consulting with the staff on what to do.

---But it must be hard for you to work on your own projects and the character designs of the Final Fantasy characters on top of that.

Nomura: Hmmm, that's true. But I feel lately I've been subtly fading out of the scene. Even though I worked on the designs for FFXI, it didn't stand out.

---You were done in?

Nomura: I was only helping. I've been gradually sticking more with my own team.

---You mean that you would like to have more power in directing?

Nomuar: Yes. Well, for Kingdom Hearts, this was the first time that I made a team from scratch by myself, and it was fun doing so. I thought, "This must be what it feels to make a game." I felt like I was experiencing something that I long forgotten. Not only me, but the staff also said that they have their own special attachment to Kingdom Hearts. I thought that there is such a good atmosphere. It was extremely tough, but I feel like we accomplished something. I wonder if that feeling comes across to the players as well.

---Lastly, what message do you want to give to the people who played Kingdom Hearts?

Nomura: Ah, I'm extremely, *extremely* grateful to the people who played this game. I had no idea how this game would fare before it was released. I thought, "Is this really interesting?"

But when it was released, it received high ratings and players told me that they liked it. “It actually became this popular,” I thought to myself. That’s why I’m incredibly thankful. This whole time I thought I would make this game with little reward, but I feel it finally paid off. I heard that there are seven times the amount of survey postcards of people saying they want a sequel, so I spoke with the staff and we are thinking of ways to live up to the expectation. Thank you very much.

Tetsuya Nomura

Profile

Born in October, 1970. Lives in Kouchi prefecture. Was hired by the Square Co. in 1991. Major works are Final Fantasy V, VI, VII, VIII, X, Parasite Eve, Parasite Eve 2, and Bouncer.

A Secret About the Game Only I Know

The words that appear in the opening were actually words that an actual character was going to say in the ending. Please enjoy speculating who was supposed to speak those lines.

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Gallery Comments Part 1

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Archive Author's Note: Non-interview content such as introductions, closing remarks, or unrelated images may have been omitted. This entry includes only the translated interview material.

—

Translator: **goldpanner**

Weapon Designs (Tetsuya Nomura, Director)

Oathkeeper: If you look at this Keyblade on its side, it forms the Japanese character for "Light". In the early stages we called it the "Kairi Keyblade," and I was envisioning giving it a paopu fruit keychain. It's my personal favorite Keyblade.

Oblivion: Its development name was the "Riku Keyblade." In early stages we planned to have Riku give you a keychain, just like the lucky charm, which is why the keychain is a different colored version of Sora's necklace. If you look at this Keyblade on its side, it forms the Japanese character for "Darkness".

Ultima Weapon: It is based on the Dream Sword, which appears at the beginning when you select a weapon. It has a fairly complex structure, and I won't deny that I went overboard, but I believe this design has impact.

Soul Eater: This isn't a Keyblade, but it is a sword that Riku uses in the first half [of the game]. I wanted to make a sword without a blade, and this is what came out after a lot of sketches. Like on the box art, I thought it was nice how it looks like a wing when he carries it on his back. Well, not that he carries it on his back in the game.

Weapon Designs (Takayuki Ohdachi, Art Director)

Metal Chocobo: As this is what you get from defeating Cloud, it's similar to his Buster Sword weapon from his original game, with an overall crude feel. The keychain is a chocobo because of Cloud's "chocobo head" nickname?

Lady Luck: A colorful design based on playing cards. It's perfect for the world where you get it, Wonderland.

Pumpkinhead: I reproduced the creepy spiked look particular to Halloween Town. Jack is on the hilt, and the keychain is a pumpkin.

Crabclaw: Since you get this from Ariel, a mermaid who lives in a kingdom under the sea, it is overflowing with an ocean vibe. The tip is a crab, the hilt has mermaids, and the keychain is a shell.

Lionheart: As this is a weapon you get from defeating Squall, it has the same name as his ultimate weapon from FFVIII. The silver tone brings to mind Squall's aesthetic. The tip and the keychain are designed after the Griever, which holds great meaning in the original game.

Divine Rose: The design is based on the rose that plays an important part in the original movie Beauty and the Beast, and the stained glass you see at the beginning and end.

Wishing Star: This design is bursting with the aesthetic of Gepetto's house, where you find it, with crafted mechanisms.

Smasher: Very small and simple. A protective design with an emphasis on attack.

Herc's Shield: Basically we turned the lightning medallion Hercules has had since he was born into a shield.

Save the King: A shield featuring designs based on wings and a heart-like shape. Just as the name suggests, the center features a crown mark.

Grand Mallet: This staff has an emphasis on attack, but it looks like an inflatable toy mallet which is adorable.

Lord Fortune: The tip is designed after the Milky Way, with lots of planet-like spheres attached.

Morning Star: As the name suggests, the tip is a star. This magic staff has a simple design.

Weapon Designs (Tetsu Tsukamoto, Texture Designer)

Keyblades: Jungle King, Three Wishes, Fairy Harp, Spellbinder, Olympia

Staves: Violetta, Save the Queen

Shields: Stout/Golem/Adamant, Mythril/Onyx, Genji

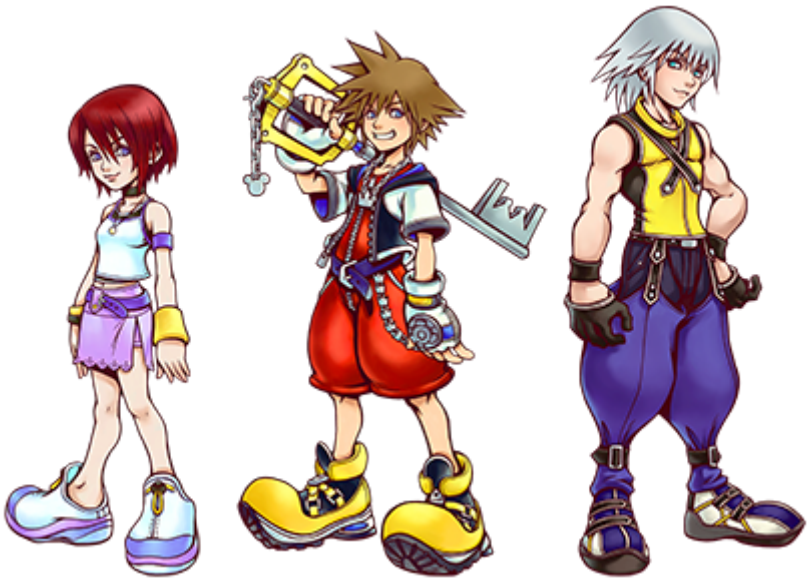
Character Designs (Tetsuya Nomura)

Ansem (robed): Based on the robed figures who wanted Reunion in FFVII. In early stages he also had a face, and he was going to appear wherever Sora went to leave mysterious messages. Even into later stages of development he was going to be a mysterious old man from Destiny Islands.

Riku (Ansem): This creepy costume is based on muscle and sinew. I actually was thinking of secretly making him a bit taller, but it would have caused issues with the animations so I rejected myself. There are a few things that perhaps only I know, such as how I made the tip of his Keyblade have a cut-out heart shape because it still needed Kairi's heart to be complete, and how the Heartless emblem on his chest is missing the thorny cross because Riku's heart has not yet completely fallen to darkness.

World of Chaos: One step before this final form, we had a phantom full body version prepared. Just like the last form has, we had a dedicated level completely created and everything. It was such a waste, I cut it with a heavy heart. Those kinds of cuts happen all the time when making games…

Illustrations (Tetsuya Nomura)



Keyblade: As a result of being asked for a necessity behind defeating enemies, the concept of "a key that frees hearts stolen by the enemies" was born. As such, the birth of the Keyblade was the foundation upon which the entire scenario of Kingdom Hearts was created.

Sora: The beginning of everything. The world of Kingdom Hearts began with this character. It was honestly such a huge honor that an extension of my own design would be joining the Disney character family, and very special feelings went into creating him - like he was the culmination of all the protagonists I'd drawn so far. In the early days I was considering a person with beast-like features including a tail, but he lost the tail due to the overlap with FFIX. His outfit also had more straight lines, which I changed to curves to match with Donald and Goofy. It was a long road to the Sora we have now. But, even so, he's still developing as a character.

Riku: His design was born from balancing with Sora. I drew him as a good old fashioned rival character, without any particular curveballs. He carries the responsibility of playing a more worried protagonist than would suit Sora. In that way, maybe he's more of a classic Square style character? The things Riku does to restore Kairi's heart are perhaps less about his feelings for her and more about his regret over sins he has committed? Or so I think. He's a surprisingly immoral guy.

Kairi: With the heroines of the other titles I've worked on so far, since I wasn't the only person in charge of the plot, I had to be more careful with them than other characters, and it was difficult to have full control - but this time I was allowed to draw exactly as I pleased. During development we floated the idea of having Kairi be playable, and I wanted to depict

Kairi's personality even more eg. against Sora, against Riku, and her past. But due to circumstances we had to postpone those ideas for now. Her hair is a secret homage to Utada Hikaru, who provided the theme song.

Foreshore (Sora): This was drawn especially for an advertisement, so I pounded it out in a single day. I had no idea it would end up being used so much. The highlight is the fishbone in his mouth. Honestly, I wanted to draw more pictures along these lines.

Blue Sky (Riku): I drew this at the same time as Foreshore. The idea behind this scene is him telling Sora, "You wanted one, didn't you?" In the game that happens at sunset, though.

Red Sunset (Kairi): I also drew this at the same time as Foreshore. The idea is that Kairi is lost in thought on the beach at sunset, although there isn't a scene like that in the game.

Donald & Goofy (KH version): Upon Disney's suggestion, their default outfits in the game are Kingdom Hearts original costumes. They said they wanted to see a "Nomura-style" design, so in order to have them match Sora I put zippers, which I make frequent use of, on every important spot. The base colors are the same as their standard costumes. I took care not to make them feel too different from their usual selves.

Friends: This is a publication-level redraw of a rough sketch I did to include in all kinds of presentation documents. It was popular among the KH PR team, so I finished it up so they could use it somewhere. In my heart, I made it to give to the PR team.

Piggyback: I drew this in the early stages for an image board to check the sense of balance between Sora, Donald and Goofy, and re-drew it fresh for publication. I like this one because in a single drawing you can see the sense of collaboration and the relationship between the three of them. As it was drawn so early on, Donald and Goofy are in their standard costumes. Once the new costumes were revealed, I limited their exposure. But the standard costumes escaped being shelved - they saw the light again in the ending. Did you notice? I find it interesting that one of the very first things I drew ended up becoming the final image of the game.

Sora (Atlantica version): I drew this for an image board in the early days, to help explain to Disney the use of each Disney world and the harmony between each world's aesthetic, which was to be the core of Kingdom Hearts. That was this merman Sora. I wanted to spend more time on the official design, but I didn't have time to indulge myself like that, so we just went with what I drew in the early days. Personally, there are lots of things I wish I could have fixed up.

Goofy (Atlantica version): I didn't draw Goofy for the board in the early days, and I stressed over what to have him turn into. I got the idea for this turtle from the supervising Disney artists, and somehow finished it without him looking too much like a seahorse. I think it's a perfect fit for the easygoing Goofy. However, I am a little bit bothered by one thing - it seems his hat didn't change…

Donald (Atlantica version): This was, like Sora, drawn for the early image board. Once the model and textures had been completed and we put it up on a screen, the tentacle suckers were a lot grosser than I had imagined and we had to keep adjusting them until we reached the current version.

Sora (Halloween Town version): I drew the body in an energy rush and don't really remember the details, but with the face I had to do quite a lot of exploring for Tim Burton's design sense. In the end, I couldn't find a good compromise, and after much pain and suffering I landed on this design. It was surprisingly well-received, and I was relieved. The motifs behind this design are imps and vampires.

Goofy (Halloween Town version): This was the easiest of the three Nightmare versions to decide on. At first he only had Frankenstein elements, but as the design went on I decided to try adding some werewolf. This made it much more interesting, so that prompted me to give all three of them two different elements.

Donald (Halloween Town version): There was an early design that I created while taking great pains to follow Tim Burton's style, but it made me burst out laughing, as well as my staff. Disney did not give it the stamp of approval, of course, but they did give me a big laugh. They said they could see how I got to that design, but they wanted me to leave more of Donald's original parts, and somehow we ended up with the current design. I am so sorry that I cannot show you that early design. The motifs behind this design are mummies and invisible men.

Shadow: Basically, we needed a make a Heartless that would be easy to display enmasse, so I challenged myself to see how simple I could make it. I wanted to have them become flat shadows and move around, so their design began there. Also, this became the concept for the movements of all Heartless.

Soldier: This design became the concept behind all Heartless. In the early days I was thinking of going with something a little more comical, but the story was getting more serious, so the designs changed too. I like all the Heartless designs.

Darkside: The concept behind it is a conglomeration of Shadows, an abstract symbol of the darkness of the heart, and of nightmares. In the development stage, you were able to stand inside the heart in its chest.

Ansem: I like this type of character, so I was naturally motivated. I planned to give him golden hair and pale skin, but as I looked at several color variations, I settled on the current colors, which are the exact opposite. Ansem is a man of many mysteries. This is his form after casting away his body - what is his true form…? I'll leave that for another time.

Tidus: A simpler version of his FFX design. He was the first FF character I drew, and I was relieved when he came out looking nice as a chibi like this.

Selphie: I planned to give her a different outfit from her FFVIII one, but once her model was complete and I compared them, it was basically the same. My mistake...

Wakka: I actually planned to have Irvine from FFVIII play this role, but no matter how many times I tried to draw him, I couldn't make him fit the island theme, and ended up going with Wakka instead. I drew this right before the deadline.

Leon: This is the first FF character we decided to have cameo. In the Kingdom Hearts universe, the FF characters aren't from the exact same settings, and are more like parallel universe versions. However, we put things in that people who know the original FF game will understand as they play, such as the wing designs on his back and his long hair. There are several reasons he doesn't go by the name Squall, but… that's for another time, sorry.

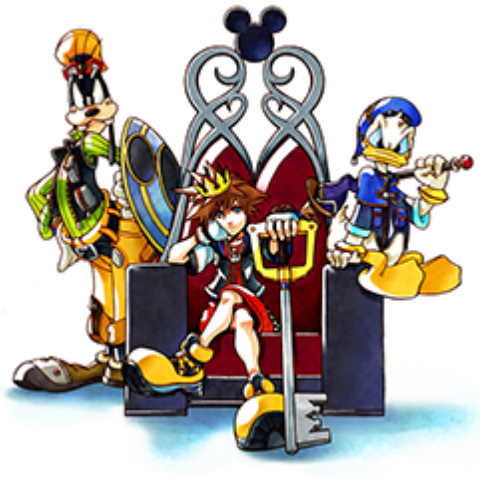
Cid: A refined Cid from FFVII. Did I go too far? It's a rather mismatched design, and I was sure Disney wouldn't go with something like this, but I did it anyway.

Yuffie: This has a complicated story behind it… In the early stages, I had planned for this role to be played by Rikku from FFX. However, something happened and we had to quickly shuffle Yuffie, who originally had a different role, into this one. In the end, Yuffie's original role was cut due to time constraints. Because of these circumstances, we designed her body to suit either role.

Cloud: The protagonist of FFVII, and a character I have a strong attachment to. The single wing that appears when he uses the power of darkness is a homage to his eternal rival Sephiroth. One answer for the scene during the credits with Aerith is that it is possible because this is a parallel universe, or so I think. By the way, the Kingdom Hearts versions of the FF characters are copyrighted by Square Enix. Fans, don't worry.

Aerith: At the time of FFVII, her expression wasn't the one intended. I asked them to change it to the correct one, but I was too late. This role was planned to be played by Aya from Parasite Eve until halfway through, but due to requests from staff who had worked on FFVII, Aerith was made to appear. Her story with Cloud grew from there. The developments in characters' stories sometimes do come from exchanges like this.

Moogle: I'd drawn these so many times before, but due to the extreme reduction of lines this time, I think I was finally able to draw my own ideal Moogle. I think the nose is the highlight..



Premonition: Disney requested a key visual that could be used to represent the entire Kingdom Hearts world, and we had many huge meetings in order to decide on this one drawing. Both Disney and Square shared a vision for Kingdom Hearts, but it was an extremely tough job to represent it in one drawing. I was particularly stressed over how to represent Donald and Goofy in a serious scene. People tended to misunderstand the tone of Kingdom Hearts, and I wanted to wipe that out. After several rejected pieces, we finally arrived at this one. I think that it was the first time in a long time that I had poured so much heart and soul into an artwork.

Throne: I drew this as part of an agreement with Toshiba EMI. It overlapped with the final stage of development, and I drew this under extreme stress. Actually, this was my personal pick for the key visual, but since it was finished in a short time it was reworked. This is the first time other than the soundtrack cover art that it has been published.

Connections: This is another piece I drew under stress with no time. I'm sure you'll see it if you look, but Sora looks a bit grown up. I'd like you to imagine for yourselves what it means. I'm still daydreaming myself.

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Sign. (2019, August 30). *A Look Back: KINGDOM HEARTS Ultimania Gallery Comments Part 1*. KHInsider. https://www.khinsider.com/news/A-Look-Back-KINGDOM-HEARTS-Ultimania-Gallery-Comments-Part-1-15519. [Archived: https://web.archive.org/web/20250716092859/https://www.khinsider.com/news/A-Look-Back-KINGDOM-HEARTS-Ultimania-Gallery-Comments-Part-1-15519].

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Kingdom Hearts Chain of Memories Ultimania

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Nomura Interview

---At the end of the previous installment, KH, there was a secret movie that was to bring light on what the sequels could be like. When you made those sequences, did you already have in mind what CoM and KHII would be like?

Nomura: In a kind of vague way yes. The most precise visions I hade were those of KHII as I already had decided that it would take place a year after KH, that the atmosphere would be different in some ways. If I was to create a KHII I wanted it to begin in the most intriguing way as it would be possible. I only began thinking about "What happens in that year between" in CoM much later.

---When we look at the project book we can see that KH: CoM was originally called "KH: Lost Memories".

Nomura: Though for some we had to change the title you'll notice it isn't that much different than the original.. I thought that "Chain of Memories" had more style and it matched the general outline of the story too (i.e. Sora relieving a succession of memories, a chain) and I personally liked it.

---What was the reason you decided to develop this installment for the GBA?

Nomura: Soon after the release of the previous installment, I was told that I should make a KH for GBA. But at the time I was skeptical of the idea of seeing KH in 2D and said "Can't do it". Then as I began to think about what I could work on next, I began to hear "Our kid wants to play KH on GBA" alot more frequently. That kind of real voice that was saying that "Kids want to play" got me seriously considering it.

---So it was the voices of the children that moved you?

Nomura: Yes. That is when I began to elaborate a gameplay system, visuals and concept artwork as well as a storyline to fill that one year story gap on the GBA. Eventually I began to think that KH in 2D really was manageable but since it was still pretty vague I came up with some systems that could adapt the KH gameplay to the GBA and asked for feedback on many members of the staff. Then I started getting "This can be done, can't it?" and that is when the CoM project was really set in motion.

---If we glance at the project book we can see that the backbone of KH: CoM ended up

coming out of your ideas.

Nomura: But all of that is written in the project book is not sufficient to make a game. All I created was the very basic concept of the game. Then by borrowing the talents and strengths of all the staff those small ideas get bigger and bigger.

---Where did you get the idea of making it a sort of card game?

Nomura: This is talking about KHII more but, if you were to begin the game with the very powerful Sora you had acquired at the end of KH, KHII wouldn't stand up to much as a game. I wanted the players to know the potential in strength Sora has more or less fulfilled at the end of the previous instalment yet not be able to use all those abilities right from the start. That is when I thought that if I could make a story in which Sora's abilities and memories all get mixed up, KH: CoM would be a perfect bridge between KH and KHII. I thought that to symbolize those messed memories and abilities cards could be used so I had to create a card based system. Thats the jist of it, I think.

---Normally when you'd say "KH for GBA" we'd think of a 2D action game where Sora flings his keyblade and defeats enemies. However in, KH: CoM we see this card system a new kind of fun coming out of the restrictions that impose a card based system.

Nomura: When I think of making a game system, I refer myself back to the one I created for FFV, In the latter, there were loads of abilities but only the possibility of equipping three at a time at most. Learning them all does not mean you are all powerful, therefore. To be efficient you need to sacrifice some things. But it isn't that dramatic. I believe that these restrictions are closely connected to the fun you have in a game. In the previous installment, this was in the slight delay between the input of the action and Sora's execution of that action, which created a little risk. This time, we aimed for a close balance between the effects of the cards and the stock techniques and the penalties they impose.

---Nowadays, Game Crews are divided into Scenario, Graphic, Sound and Programming departments but in your case, while being the Director, you can also draw, think of the game system, write the story plot and take on a variety of roles and we think that's amazing.

Nomura: The part I enjoy the most myself is writing the project while drawing little bits of visuals and showing it to the staff. We then talk and small ideas I had become bigger and much more concrete and that is when I have the most fun when developing a game. It is almost as if I wrote the project book solely for having that kind of fun (laughs). Looking back on it, even back when I was at Primary/Elementary school, I enjoyed playing "Sugoroku"

(Note by Mors: "a traditional Japanese board-game comparable to Snakes and Ladders) based on my own stories and every time, the rules changed. Perhaps I was pre-disposed to enjoying creating games systems...

---Looking a little more in-depth in the game: about Castle Oblivion, what world is it a part of?

Nomura: In the endng scene of the previous installment, Sora runs up a path that ends up in a crossroad. It is accurate to think that Castle Oblivion is at the end of one of those paths. This isn't explained in the game but the building's upper floors and underground floors respectively represent the Light and Darkness of memories.

---In the opening, there is a scene where Namine drawing Castle Oblivion and that image overlaps with the real thing but does that mean that the Castle was created out of Namine's drawing?

Nomura: That is incorrect. Castle Oblivion is under the orders of a member of the "Org", Marluxia and Namine is taken there by them. Within the Castle, the Org members are conducting a little research but the real meaning of the "Organization" will be explained fully in KHII. For now those aspects remain obscure so it is a relatively enigmatic group. Incidentally, there are 13 members in the Organization, therefor some have yet to be introduced.

---About the Org. members' names, they all seem to have an 'x' in them when translated into English.

Nomura: Although it gives them an otherworldly sound, in their case there is another trick behind the choice of their names. It's just that, with the members that appeared this time, it is difficult to figure this out. I'm planning on making characters appear in KH2 with names that will make you go "Aaaaah. I got it."

---Speaking of not understanding, the identify of the leader of the Organization is also an enigma

Nomura: "Isn't it Ansem?" or "Isn't it the one bandaged in red?" are just some of the theories I guess some of you have thought of. The thing is, KH2 is, even for me, unfolding in developing in such a complex way that at this stage nothing may be pronounced with certainty. Thanks to those members of the "Organization", I think KH2 will be quite an interesting and fun story.

---By "the one bandaged in red", you mean DiZ?

Nomura: Yes. DiZ will be one of the most important characters in the story to come and

holds the answer to many questions. But, what he is thinking and what he wants is unclear to his entourage. When you learn his identity, you'll possibly be surprised.

---Is there a link between the name DiZ and Disney?

Nomura: It was suggested that it would be his name because a few members of the staff liked it. I also put it in because of a reason but... I'll try to remember what that was until next time (laugh).

---In the newly introduced "Org." members, which is your favorite?

Nomura: I guess that would be Axel. He is also very popular with a majority of the other members of the staff. Given that he is further given delicious roles in KH2... Axel's true motivations, though I cannot tell them now, are a great story. You could cry. The scene where he tells you what he really wants is one scene you simply cannot miss in KH2.

---Why didn't Sephiroth appear this time?

Nomura: Since he had been given the role in KH: Final Mix, the fans wouldn't forgive me if the next time I used him, I didn't give him a role more closely related to Cloud. If I am to use him, I want him to stand out and that is why he did not appear this time. However I am thinking of a little something with Cloud in KH2...

---In the ending of Riku's story, Riku chooses neither the path of Light nor Darkness, but the road in-between. How will that choice affect him as one who wields the keyblade?

Nomura: What Riku is thinking at that point will become clear later. He decides to follow the road in-between to achieve a certain goal. Riku's story was about "What is my relation with the Darkness?", but some things, such as what he is, have yet to be explained.

---At that point, DiZ says "The road to twilight...", but does that have a relation with Twilight Town?

Nomura: Yes, it does. This will again be talked about in KH2, but... twilight, that is the time when it is neither day nor night. That theme of being in-between light and dark is central to KH2. In the previous installment it talked more about being of either Light or Dark, but this time we've added being "in the middle". That is why there now is a Twilight Town and a Riku who follows neither Light nor Dark, but both. Twilight Town is the first world to appear in KH2, too. It is very different opening from the Destiny Islands abundant with light you begin the previous installment on and people who played KH might say "What's this?" and get confused. However, I plan to give that confusion further depth as the story goes on.

---During this game, Twilight Town is presented as being: "A town built out of the memories of Sora's other side."

Nomura: Yes. But, let's just say it's not a town that is in Sora's own memories. It's not that Sora has any memory of that town but... hmmmm... there is a link. It is a very important part in KH2 so it's difficult to explain.

---At the end of Riku's story we see a young kid standing in Twilight Town. Who is he?

Nomura: He is a new character to appear in KH2 and he holds a very important part to play, too. I will refrain from too much detail but he is to be a playable character. Besides him, many of the secret characters from the previous installment's secret movies will appear in KH2. I plan to explain what the situations depicted in the secret movies signify.

---There is a KH card game that is being released. I guess you take part in that as well?

Nomura: Indeed. Actually, i've never played a card game. I didn't know any of the rules the card games currently released have, so I had to think of what could make the game fun myself. Then when it was decided that there would be a KH card game I wanted them to use the rules I had made up, but I realized that this was too difficult. So I decided to make it a KH card game in its own right. I was told to give up quite a few ideas while developing it. You might see that in the simplistic design the cards ended up in.

---There were also some cards with designs from KH2, right?

Nomura: The publisher TOMY talked about making this a long term project. That is why I suggested featuring characters such as The King not only from CoM, but from KH2 as well. The lineup for quite a few future packs have already been decided. There also is quite a non-exhaustive list of the characters I want to appear and I have to design quite a few of them and it's tiresome. It seems my commitment with card games might go as far as that with video games

---Are there other fronts on which you plan to develop the KH franchise?

Nomura: There's those chess pieces we revealed at the Game Show. They are considerably well done. There are many female fans for KH which is rather different from the other goodies we release. So we're looking into developing more female oriented products. There are plenty of ideas in that respect when it comes to KH so please look forward to it.

---We have heard that in America, there is a KH being developed for the mobile phone.

Nomura: There are quite a few things concerning that... Officially it has nothing to do with the original KH. It's completely different. The title is KH, Sora makes an appearance but the

story has nothing to do whatsoever with KH, CoM, and KH2, we're developing since Disney is designing it.

---The story is carrying on to KH2, but is there a story that will continue CoM itself?

Nomura: This game system is very fun to use so I want to use it again the future. However, CoM doesn't really have a story in itself but, is just a piece of a much larger story. Right now, I feel that making a CoM 2 is a very difficult thing indeed.

---Within yourself, have you been thinking far in terms of the story of the world of KH?

Nomura: No, for now it's been decided on how KH2 will end but I really haven't been thinking beyond that. All the enigmas that arose in KH and CoM will be solved in KH2 so it is possible to end it all then and there. However, quite a few new mysteries are glimpsed at in KH2 so it isn't impossible to create another story afterwards. The question now is "shall it be done?".

---But will KH2 feature secret movies that glimpse into a possible sequal again?

Nomura: I quite like secret movies so there might something in KH2... But first, we need to finish KH2 (laughs).

---Finally, how do you feel now that you've finished CoM?

Nomura: In the days following the release, I felt similarly to the way I felt after that of the previous installment. The players were first saying "Not that we're complaining, but it is a kind of worrying title" and similar feedback rose. This is what I call a good feeling. Indeed, similarly to the previous installment, as the feedback of more and more players came to me, the popularity increased and that makes me really happy.

---The previous installment, for a contemporary game, has become quite a long running hit.

Nomura Indeed. But this installment isn't exactly the concept I originally had in mind... as well as being portable, it was designed so that you could interrupt your game at any time but with CoM, once you start, it's hard to put down. (laugh) That is a truly happy feeling. So much data in such a small cartridge which I think is for players to explore. It is all connected with KH2 so I really hope that fans of the previous installment will play this game

---When we play CoM, we really being to feel anxious for KH2.

Nomura: KH2 is a lot faster than the previous installment but, still within limits. But, please look forward to it. Though I can't really say this myself, KH2 is really looking to become a bloody great episode. It's as if we just crammed into it all we thought of KH and CoM. The volume of it isn't exactly many times that of the previous installment but I'm really beginning

to scratch my heart as to if it's all going to hold on a single DVD-ROM

---We're eager to find out what new worlds will be featured, too.

Nomura: We've already revealed Mulan's world, but there will also be a very surprising world. As much as The Nightmare Before Christmas' Halloween Town was in the preview installment. You'll probably think "What is he thinking!?". The characters of those worlds will also be very well modelled as we have worked hard on those polygons.

---The more we talk about it, the more we want to play KH2, but when exactly will it be released!?

Nomura: Due to a lot of factors, it is very difficult to say at this point. All I can say is that it will be released after FF7: Advent Children. (laughs)

Tetsuya Nomura- Gameography: KH, FF5,6,7,8,10,10-2, Parasite Eve, Parasite Eve 2, The Bouncer.

A secret known by him alone

The 13 members of The Org. as well as having numbers, have powers attributed to each of them. Thus Axel was fire, Larxene was thunder, Lexaeus was earth, and Marluxia's flower shaped scythe was representing his power over flowers

Cecily. (2012, May 5). *Kingdom Hearts Chain of Memories Ultimania - Main Nomura Interview.* KHInsider. https://www.khinsider.com/news/Kingdom-Hearts-Chain-of-Memories-Ultimania-Main-Nomura-Interview-2559. [Archived: https://web.archive.org/web/20250716104401/https://www.khinsider.com/news/Kingdom-Hearts-Chain-of-Memories-Ultimania-Main-Nomura-Interview-2559].

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System Team & Graphic Team Interview

Archive Author's Note: Non-interview content such as introductions, closing remarks, or unrelated images may have been omitted. This entry includes only the translated interview material.

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Translator: **goldpanner**

Interviewees (L-R):

Takeshi Arakawa, Menu Design Director

Previous Works: KINGDOM HEARTS, FINAL FANTASY VIII, IX, X

Tomohiro Hasegawa, Character Art Director

Previous Works: FINAL FANTASY VIII, IX, X, X-2, SaGa Frontier

Yuichi Kanemori, Planning Director

Previous Works: KINGDOM HEARTS, Parasite Eve 2

Tatsuya Kando, Animation Director

Previous Works: KINGDOM HEARTS, FINAL FANTASY VII, VIII, IX, Parasite Eve

The keyword was "KH-esque"

—How was it decided that the next game to follow the smash hit Kingdom Hearts would be a card action game?

Kanemori: A lot happened before we settled on its current form. We actually started development form Chain of Memories at the same time as KH2. Compared to KH2, an

orthodox sequel, this was to be an 'inbetween' story. Plus, it was going to be on a different console, so there was a lot of trial and error involved in figuring out what exactly was "KH-esque"...

Arakawa: At first it was more of a pure card game, wasn't it.

Kando: When we all got together to discuss ideas, director (Tetsuya) Nomura said he wanted to do a KH series card game. And then right after that, he also said, "But since it's KH, it has to be a KH-esque one." A vague instruction indeed (laughs).

Kanemori: When he said that, I said, "Understood. KH-esque, got it" (laughs). So that's how development began, but in the end we relaxed as we realised that even while making a card game, it wouldn't work if the controls felt too removed from the previous game, and things drifted closer to its current form.

Hasegawa: To put it simply, the action components gradually increased. In the beginning you couldn't even jump.

Kanemori: When we started development, it was just a card game that had taken on the series aesthetic and story. Maybe that would have worked anyway, but we didn't want fans who played the previous game to be like, this is a completely different game. That brought on a change of direction - we worked to make something that people who played the previous game could get into easily, and that would make them think "oh yes, this is KH."

Kando: When I played what the development company Jupiter had made using Kanemori's specification documents, I accidentally said, "oh, it IS KH!" out loud.

Kanemori: It was difficult to adjust the balance between the card ls and the action. Put too much emphasis on handling the cards, and Sora's just standing there saying lines. But then put too much emphasis on moving Sora, and you start wondering why you even need the cards. We basically covered the borderline parts by making sure there were a wide range of card effects.

—After Side Sora, you can play Side Riku. Was this planned from the start?

Kanemori: We didn't start working on it til the latter half of development, but we had been saying we wanted to do it from the start. We decided it would involve different rules than Side Sora, which meant even fighting the same boss would feel like a different kind of game, and bring out a different kind of fun. That was our goal. Side Riku is sort of like a kind of puzzle game - it's fun to figure out how to work with a fixed deck.

Arakawa: When we started on Side Riku, I realized we needed to make a different title screen from Side Sora's. It would be boring if there was just some text there to select, right? I

listened to Kanemori's concept for Side Riku and made a placeholder picture to show Nomura at the next meeting. I told him to draw something to put there, I pretty much sprang it on him (laughs).

Trial and error developing for the GBA

—Although the previous title was on the PS2, this title was for the Game Boy Advance. Was there anything in particular you paid mind to?

Hasegawa: When creating 2D pixel sprites for 3D characters, they end up with a chibi feel no matter what you do. I paid a lot of attention to the art, trying to make sure there was a balance. Sora worked out rather chibi, but we did a lot of versions of the taller characters like Cloud and Leon, testing what level of chibi would work for them.

Kando: My main task was creating materials to give Jupiter, so they could make the pixel art. I re-rendered the 3D CG from the previous game to find the angles that would look the best in 2D. I prepared materials for everything: Sora's battle motions, the Heartless, and more. I paid a lot of attention to adjusting to find the very best angles.

Hasegawa: Also, we all went back and forth over how to do cutscenes at that level of resolution. Should we use talk sprites that show the characters' expressions? Or should we have the little sprites act everything out?

Arakawa: In the end we did both (laughs). But I think the way we were able to express everything through the facial expressions and gestures was perfect for the GBA console.

—The map involves unique gameplay too, doesn't it.

Arakawa: Making rooms using cards was something Nomura was saying right from the start.

Kando: At the very start of development, Nomura drew out on a whiteboard his idea of what kind of game he wanted to make. Things were fleshed out from there, but those bones stayed the same right from the beginning. Thinking about that now, it's pretty amazing.

Hasegawa: If I remember correctly, at the beginning the maps were simpler - the rooms were going to fit on one screen. They gradually got bigger, until they finally became the auto-generated rooms.

Kanemori: The screen where you switch rooms also started out as a tasteless menu where you just selected a card. I think the expressive way it is now, where a spotlight lights up a door in the dark, does a good job of making the rooms actually feel connected.

Arakawa: I designed it based on that symbolic scene from the previous game, where the door opens in the dream.

Kando: Also, at first battles didn't happen on the field.

Hasegawa: Yeah, that's right. You used to have to put a cursor over a stationary Heartless on the field to start the battle.

Kanemori: Changing it to an enemy encounter system was a big decison. We made the battles happen on a dedicated field fixed to side view.

Arakawa: Refining battles to side view made the action much easier to do.

The day we finished the ending…

—The cutscenes that play during the opening and at key points make a huge impact for a GBA game.

Hasegawa: Right from the beginning of development, we said that in the name of being "Kh-esque" we wanted to put in movies. But, when we actually tried some test displays on the GBA, the video just wouldn't turn out how we wanted…

Kando: We couldn't reproduce the cutscenes from Kingdom Hearts.

Hasegawa: Yeah. You can make cartoon styles with block colors and minimum shading come out looking good, and you can make photo-realistic footage look good since the high amount of information means a little roughness doesn't stand out. But the 3D CG cartoon look of KH involves designs built on subtle gradations - the image data doesn't compress well. So, we tried all sorts of tests - changing the screen brightness, adding shading to the finished cutscenes, etc - until we reached a level of quality we could accept.

Arakawa: Yeah, we did fiddle around with screen brightness a lot, didn't we.

Hasegawa: The basic GBA and GBA SP have different screen brightness of course, as the latter featured front lighting. You can give players the option to adjust the brightness in-game, but you can't change the brightness of cutscenes. So, we kept adjusting things until right before master up to find something that would look okay on both the GBA and GBA SP.

Arakawa: In the end, we even checked it on the Nintendo DS, which wasn't out yet.

—We were also surprised to hear Hikari by Utada Hikaru play just as it was in the ending.

Hasegawa: Depending on the volume of data, the sound quality of music can be drastically different. By mixing the volume of the game itself, the cutscene, and the music, it really pushed the limits of the graphics optimization.

Arakawa: Speaking of the ending, we had a lot of difficulty because the content wasn't settled on until the very very end of development. Right on the brink of the deadline we re-watched the end of KH1 and had a discussion that went like this: "Actually such-and-such should happen," "But we don't have space left, it's going to be impossible," "We have no

time either." But one hour after that, somehow it got decided that we were going with the impossible plan (laughs). All staff went into full-mobilization mode after that.

Hasegawa: Right at that time, Nomura went to the Venice International Film Festival for Final Fantasy VII Advent Children. He told us to finish the game and he would retroactively approve it since there was no time.

Arakawa: Even though there was a chance he would reject everything when he checked it.

—Wait a minute, Nomura went to Venice right when the scheduled date for the master up was right around the corner…

Arakawa: We will leave it to your imagination (laughs).

Secrets of this title that only they know:

Kanemori:

I've heard people talk about all kinds of strange rules: X card has a higher chance of appearing as the first card after turning the console on, if you do Y in the right order enemy cards are more likely to appear. But, the truth is we didn't program anything like that.

Arakawa:

When selling cards at the Moogle Shop, the moogle is stirring a pot. Just for the moment you sell a card, he starts stirring a little faster. I wanted to give him a reaction to the player's actions.

Kando:

The 2D pixel sprites for the new Heartless and characters were all made after first creating 3D polygon models. It's a shame the polygon models for the Organization characters are unusable anywhere as they are...

Hasegawa:

When making animations for characters and enemies, basic sprites need to be drawn first. Those basic sprites were surprisingly underused in the game. Since it felt like a waste, we ended up putting them in Jiminy's Journal at the last minute.

Sign. (2019, November 1). *A Look Back: CoM Ultimania Gallery - System Team & Graphic Team Interview.* KHInsider. https://www.khinsider.com/news/A-Look-Back-CoM-Ultimania-System-Team-Graphic-Team-Interview-15757. [Archived:

https://web.archive.org/web/20250716110650/https://www.khinsider.com/news/A-Look-Back-CoM-Ultimania-System-Team-Graphic-Team-Interview-15757].

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Scenario & Graphic Team Interview

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Translator: **goldpanner**

Interviewees (L-R):

Tatsuya Kando, Animation Director

Previous Works: KINGDOM HEARTS, FINAL FANTASY VII, VIII, IX, Parasite Eve

Ryou Tsurumaki, Event Planner

Previous Works: KINGDOM HEARTS, FINAL FANTASY VIII, Chrono Cross

Daisuke Watanabe, Scenario Writer

Previous Works: KINGDOM HEARTS, FINAL FANTASY X, X-2, X-2 Last Mission, Threads of Fate

Tomohiro Hasegawa, Character Art Director

Previous Works: FINAL FANTASY VIII, IX, X, X-2, SaGa Frontier

The line in Side Sora I wanted to write the most

—How did work begin on the scenario?

Watanabe: It began last year (2003) around the time of Golden Week (T/N: early May), when Nomura told me the rough concept: it'd start after the ending of the previous game, the

story would be related to memories, that you'd climb a Castle Oblivion with 13 floors, that at the end Namine would give you a big choice, and that it would connect to Kingdom Hearts II. It happened to be right after I had just finished writing the scenario for FFX-2 Last Mission, and I remember thinking, another story about climbing to the top of a thing!? (laughs). Also, he told me that a couple of people from an "Organization" would appear, and that there would actually be a Side Riku too. I thought of a story that would work within that scaffold.

—Was it difficult, having so many characters to include?

Watanabe: Since this is a game where you get to explore various worlds in the order you choose, it raised difficulties in controlling the order of the story, so I did stress over how to involve the characters as you progress. Also, a portion of the cutscenes had to go in a set format, so after trial and error I found a way to make the scenario flow between those decided points. I can say this now, it was the biggest slump I'd experienced since starting my career as a scenario writer.

—There are two stories: Side Sora and Side Riku. The two feel very different, don't they?

Watanabe: I was allowed free reign for Side Riku. Since there's no Donald or Goofy, I felt that Riku's individual growth had to carry the story, and I went with a plot about light and darkness. The way things ended for Riku in first game honestly for me left a lot to be desired. My own personal wish was to give Riku as a character more time to shine.

—What were your thoughts while writing Side Sora?

Watanabe: At a certain point, Sora finds out what Namine has done to him. After this, he says something like, "Even so, you're my friend, Namine. So I'm happier when you're smiling." That was the piece of dialogue I wanted to write the most in the whole game. That scene crystallized inside me, and finally broke me free of that long slump.

—The scenario you wrote for FFX-2 Last Mission was interwoven with a theme that was something like: even if things aren't going well right now, the fun moments from the past are solid, and they won't fade. I feel like it works here too.

Watanabe: You're absolutely correct. That feeling of happiness from having met someone - even if it is based on lies or misunderstanding, the fact that you were happy was still real. To be unwavering about the truth here and reject the happiness you felt as "fake" is sad, I think.

—The Riku Replica has a similar theme, doesn't he. Even if everything was fake, the fact that he existed was still real.

Watanabe: Yes, that's right. Those things are connected, in my mind. I've been using the word "connected" a lot recently. I think I got it from Sora in the first game, when he says "the hearts connected to mine are my power" (TN: localized as "my friends are my power" in the English version). That line popped into my head out of nowhere when I was writing the scenario for that game, and I realized how much I like the word "connect." It stayed with me and influenced my work on this game and on FFX-2.

First attempt at developing a handheld game

—The cutscenes are an important feature of this game. What was the process behind making them?

Tsurumaki: Using the finished scenario, we designated motions and expressions for the characters for each line. Then, we took this to Jupiter, the development company, who programmed it for us. We stressed a lot over the halls on each floor of Castle Oblivion. Since the maps all look the same, it took a lot of effort to differentiate them using character movement and such.

Hasegawa: We put a lot of thought into the layout of the screen, such as how and where to position the little character sprites doing the acting and the facial talk-sprites that appear during conversations on the screen.

Watanabe: On the beginning we had lots of ideas on the screen design. We considered doing the dialogue with speech bubbles.

—Cutscene directing would have been very different from this 2D game compared to the first 3D game, right?

Watanabe: I mean, this was the first handheld game this group here had ever developed. Up until now, I'd only ever worked on 3D games. The thing that gave me the most trouble was that I couldn't use camera work when directing.

Tsurumaki: You can't swap between camera angles when working with 2D, so you end up filming the same shot for stretches. One thing that gave me trouble was finding ways to create room to breathe. In the end, the people in charge of the talk-sprites did a lot of the heavy lifting for me, I am very thankful.

Hasegawa: You could say they did too much lifting for you: despite using a high capacity 256MB cartridge, towards the end we ran out of space and I had to ask him to stop ordering any more expressions (laughs). Right up to the end we were still adjusting which expressions we could re-use where and which scenes actually needed more expressions.

Watanabe: Due to capacity issues, there are some characters who didn't get different expression talk-sprites. We weren't sure what to do, but since one character was fainted the whole time anyway we thought we could get away with not giving them one, even though it's obvious who (laughs).

What is the biggest secret in this game?

—Do you have a favorite cutscenes, Tsurumaki?

Tsurumaki: In the final cutscene room in Olympus Coliseum, I think the scene that starts when Hercules and and Cloud face off came out pretty well.

Watanabe: And it even finishes with his signature "Not interested" pose.

Hasegawa: Flashy direction doesn't really suit Cloud, so it was difficult to create that pose. When making his hair flip, if we made the movement too exaggerated it wouldn't be Cloud-like enough, but if we made it too subtle it would be too hard to tell what the movement was meant to be. We had an astounding number of back-and-forths with Jupiter over this. Nomura kept telling us we weren't nailing his expression, too, so there were a lot of retake of that.

Watanabe: This could also be said of all games in the series, but with this game each character was only going to have a small amount of screen time, so we had to make sure they got as many juicy parts as possible in the limited number of scenes they had. We worked hard to create as many parts as possible that would make the players grin, like Cloud's "Not interested".

Kando: I personally like the scenes that show the "Organization" members doing things behind the scenes. It adds to the vibe that this game is more complex and difficult than the previous one. Plus, those scenes help make the game feel fully fleshed out.

Watanabe: It was very easy to think of scenes for the "Organization" people. I love writing those kinds of conversations between people with terrible personalities, and scenes where true intentions come to light (laughs).

Hasegawa: For me personally, Larxene's introductory scene packed a lot of punch. I'd worked on her sprites first, and got the scenario later. I was surprised at what kind of person she was.

Watanabe: One time Nomura rang me up in the middle of the night to ask out of the blue, "What are these Organization guys like?" I explained them to him like "Larxene is an extremely terrible person," "Zexion is like the tactician," "Vexen is usually calm but snaps easily" and such.

Tsurumaki: When I first read the scenario, Larxene's lines popped off the page. I could tell then you had a blast writing her (laughs).

Watanabe: It's because this game isn't voiced. When writing for something that will be voiced, you have to be a little more restrained with the wording, to give the voice actor room to act with abandon. But since we couldn't rely on voice actors' performances this time, we had nothing but the letters of the words themselves to convey the characters. I had no choice but to write with abandon instead. Compare that to FFX, where the characters had exaggerated manners of speech.

—Speaking of voice work, your name appears in the credits as a voice actor, doesn't it, Kando?

Kando: (Panicking) That's top secret.

Hasegawa: We will leave exactly who a secret, but we will say that he was responsible for several characters.

—Kando, you made ur debut as the motion capture actor for Tinkerbell's hands and the Large Body's movements in the first game, didn't you? And now for this game, you've made your debut as a voice actor.

Kando: There are characters who appear in battles but didn't have any voices in the early stages of development. We thought it would be more interesting to give them some kind of vocal effects, but it would have been too much to bring out a voice actor just for those tiny battles scenes…

Hasegawa: Every time voice casting came up, Kando would offer himself (laughs).

Kando: No, no, I just put it out there as a joke (laughs).

Secrets of this title that only they know:

Watanabe:

In Side Riku, secret information on the Organization members etc. is contained in records called the D Reports. These reports were all written by one character who appears in this game. Enjoy guessing who on earth "he" could be, and whose side he is on.

Tsurumaki:

We ordered a smiling face talk-sprite to use for conversations with Leon, but it felt out of place so we cut it. I wanted to show a slice of his kindness, though… I named it the "phantom smile."

Sign. (2019, November 7). *A Look Back: CoM Ultimania Gallery - Scenario & Graphic Team Interview.* KHInsider. https://www.khinsider.com/news/A-Look-Back-CoM-Ultimania-Scenario-Graphic-Team-Interview-15935. [Archived: https://web.archive.org/web/20250717122635/https://www.khinsider.com/news/A-Look-Back-CoM-Ultimania-Scenario-Graphic-Team-Interview-15935].

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Nomura Interview

---When did KHII's development officially start?

Nomura: In the previous game, I inserted a secret movie in hopes of creating a sequel, but to actually pull it off, KHII had a number of hurdles that I had to clear first. Like our wish "to give Mickey more spotlight", we had to wait until Disney allowed that and once it's settled, then we could finally talk about KHII's development.

---Once the project started, did you have an image of how you wanted KHII to be like?

Nomura: One of (our goals) was to recover all the foreshadowing from the previous game. Then we took all the complaints we heard from it and fixed it to bring satisfaction. At the same time, we also thought of adding more into direction and increase choices in the battle system. Like this, the development was going towards the path of increasing the volume of the game from the start, so we thought "There are a lot of things that need to be done, but let's do all of them" and stuck to that thinking.

---So is the finished game's volume just like what you expected, Nomura-san?

Nomura: No, I didn't expect it to go this far. My staff just wouldn't stop working. (laugh) I thought we would start cutting back some things if we ever run out of time, but many of the staff just wouldn't stop. I asked them "Are you alright with this?" and they would simply answer "Yeah, I can do this." I've always been nervous all the time but in the end they accomplished and I was moved. "Wow, you all really did it."

---In the huge battle where we have to go through 1000 Heartless, all the staff thought they couldn't pull it off but in the end they could, eh?

Nomura: Yes. I always estimated that "If we have to drop something, it'll have to be this part" but instead the staff demand for something higher. When it came to "No, we can't do that but if we go a little lower, that should be okay," I thought we would leave it at that but the staff would still make something of a higher level. (laugh) That is why I didn't think that huge battle would actually materialize to that point in the end.

---Compared to its prequel, there are a lot of impressions on how there are less Jump actions, more user-friendly help menus and the difficulty level is lower; did you put that into thought?

Nomura: Yes. Last time we made a lot of things less user-friendly and we end up really being told it's "not friendly". (laugh) So that's why this time we added information, navigation maps and so on, and created it to be very user-friendly.

---Did you have troubles because this is a sequel?

Nomura: The game's story is a direct sequel of the first game so yes, there was that fear. Initially I didn't bear it in my mind as "a sequel". But, as I sat down and thought calmly before the game's release, I thought "How will those who didn't know about the previous game think of KHII? I wonder if they won't buy it. Maybe this isn't good." But still many people accepted it so I'm glad.

---3 days after the game's release 1 million copies of it got shipped out, after all. Do you think there's a reason on why the fanbase has widen?

Nomura: I get the feeling it's because we made something that has a wide 'frontage', something that doesn't have age or gender as its threshold. I hear things like "My 6-year-old son is playing this" and "People in their 40's and 50's also play this" quite often. I guess that means it's because the game has a 'wide frontage'.

---What's the theme that you most wanted to express this time?

Nomura: Not just this time; "Kingdom Hearts" always have something like "a person's heart" and "connection of hearts" as its theme. Like the strength of an invisible "heart" or what's the most important thing to you, that's what I was thinking while drawing the story.

---One of the surprises of playing KHII is that the scenes and lines foreshadowed in the "deep dive" secret movie in KH:FM were actually cleared. On solving the underplots, how much was hypothesized back in the first KH?

Nomura: I think half was thought up back in the first game, another half was thought up once we started working on KHII. Even so, that doesn't mean we didn't think of them at all in the first place, but more like a rough "maybe we should do this." We also changed somethings we thought up at that time so that's what I mean by half-half.

---For example, the heart-shaped moon in the previous game's key visual showed up this time as the Kingdom Hearts. Did you think of doing this right from the start?

Nomura: No, I didn't. I asked Nojima-san (Nojima Kazushige) to write KHII's scenario and in his scenario it was written that the Kingdom Hearts Xemnas created is "like a moon that floats in the World that Never Was." When I read that, I thought "Oh, this can be connected!" (laugh) so I made it to look like the moon in the previous game's key visual. The World that Never Was has the "Dark City" right from the beginning of the game's development and since

then its background is night. That's why when Nojima-san wrote that Xemnas was creating Kingdom Hearts in the sky, coincidentally he wrote "it looks like a moon" but I thought it got connected by destiny.

---If KHII was never released, what would happen to the mysteries left in the first game?

Nomura: I guess they'll just stay untold. (laugh) I have a severe opinion about that but I think a game that doesn't sell just shouldn't have a sequel. If many people want a sequel, I'll have to answer to that but if not, I have to bravely give up. Thank goodness we had a lot of fans saying they want a continuation so we were able to make it, but if KH was a game that nobody wants a sequel of, then it's not that bad for the unsolved mysteries to stay that way, anyway. Besides, even if KHII was not released now, the fans can still have fun with the underplots in the previous game and make their own speculations. In that way, although the game gets old, people can still continue being happy with it so I think it's possible to draw the curtain like how the previous game did.

---A game sure needs elements where people can discuss and make speculation.

Nomura: When we were kids, we always thought "there's not enough things to imagine from this" when reading manga, watching anime or playing games, and I thought that is strange. Whether it's game, anime or manga, there should be a place where you can speculate things. I have that feeling so I wanted to make a game that gives space for your imagination. That's why I don't like revealing everything and say "This is the answer." Just like when I was a kid, I want to make something that can allow people to let loose their imagination with.

---How did you choose the worlds that get inserted into KHII?

Nomura: Just like in the first KH, we make sure we don't overlay each world's outlooks. In abstract, we make world categories like "lots of greens", "gothic", "near future" and so on, and then think which world fits those categories. For example, in the first game there was the "Tarzan" world and at the same time there's an idea for a "Jungle Book" world, too. But both worlds' appearances look almost the same so I took some opinions from the staff and make a choice between those two. KHII's worlds were chosen one-by-one like that, too, but at that time I was at Disney's HQ in Los Angeles to make contract negotiations. On the day we had an appointment with the Disney HQ on requesting which worlds we wanted to use, I sent emails (through handphone) to the staff asking "This world got the OK sign, so what do you think?" and so on and made the choices at real-time.

---Half of the worlds in the first game were major Disney titles so did you have a hard time choosing new worlds?

Nomura: Before choosing a world I certainly wondered if the choice was okay or not. But when I thought of "Tron", "Pirates of the Caribbean" and "Steamboat Willie" and so on, I got the feeling those are good choices. Half of the worlds overlayed with the previous game's but the new worlds give great impact so I thought they would be alright. Besides, this is still a sequel so people might want to re-visit some old worlds. In that way, both old and new worlds are inserted at the right ratio.

---I heard it was you who suggested to insert the Seasalt Ice-cream in the game.

Nomura: Yes, I did. When the Tokyo Disney Sea opened and I went there by invitation, they were selling Seasalt Ice-creams at the time. You would think a "salty ice-cream" seems a pretty weird idea, right? I was like "What is this?" so I tried it out and it turned out to be very tasty. My impression of it back then was so strong that I overlapped Disney's image with seasalt ice-cream. Besides that, Roxas' story is set in summer break and I wondered what did I eat back in summer breaks when I was a kid and I remembered "Ah, of course, ice-cream." Although I was the one who said I wanted to use it, Nojima-san was was the one who actually made it show up that much. Even I was surprised; "You're using it this often!?" (laugh) I think that shows the playful-ness of Nojima-san's scenarios.

---The text that's written on the photos in Jiminy Memo's Album is written by you, right?

Nomura: Yes. The project and menu leader came to my booth and said hesitantly "I want the text in the Album to be hand-written." I answered "I think that's okay" and he replied "No, I want you to write them down, Nomura-san." At that time there weren't that many sheets of paper so I said, "sure, I can write it" but just as I finished writing and gave back those sheets, more and more sheets kept coming in to the point of making me wonder when exactly they would stop coming in, and that's when I thought, "Oh, shoot." (laugh)

---Since those writings were 'written by Sora', that means Sora's handwriting is the same as your handwriting, right? (laugh)

Nomura: Yeah, I suppose so. (laugh) My handwritings have been used in websites and advertisements so when I asked "Wouldn't people recognize it's my handwriting?", they just answered "That'll be okay." By the way, those text will be erased in the international version and just be something limited to the Japanese version. I asked them "You're not saying I should write English for the NA version or French or German in the UK version, right?" and

they answered "No, we're not inserting the text in the international versions" so I was saved by that. (laugh)

---On what kind of basis did you choose the FF characters?

Nomura: In a way, we selected characters that are on demand. We considered from both fans and the staff's opinions and it all ends with just characters that are highly on demand.

---And Tifa from FFVII showed up

Nomura: In fact, back when we were working on KH:FM, some of the staff members wanted to have Tifa show up. They said "Battling with Tifa would be fun, in a melee sense" and originally wanted to add both Sephiroth and Tifa (into KH:FM) but due to tight schedules, we could only go with one character so we inserted Sephiroth into KH:FM. Because of that, we decided to let Tifa show up in this game. When we were recording the voices for KHII, coincidentally they were also doing the recording for FFVII:AC so somehow we end up doing "Today we record FFVII:AC, tomorrow KHII"... (laugh) The voices were recorded in the same flow so I'm glad about that.

---Speaking of Tifa, there's an event where she talked to Cloud after beating Sephiroth.

Nomura: n Nojima-san's scenario, it explained Cloud and Tifa's connection more in-depth but I deleted it away. I thought it would be more interesting to let the gamers think about it. For example, "If Cloud's darkness is Sephiroth, then Tifa is light"; in that sense you can take it that Tifa isn't really human. The reason Tifa doesn't talk to anyone else besides Sora and co. may be because she doesn't exist as a human. Of course, I also presented her in a way that she could also be a resident of Hollow Bastion, so I think you can freely think for yourself about her.

---So Yuna, Rikku and Paine showed up as faeries this time.

Nomura: I've always wanted to have a FF character showing up as "something that looks human but isn't human" at least once. Since "Kingdom Hearts" is a deformed world, I wanted to have a little fun with that. And as a plus, if all three showed up in their normal human size, I was kind of worried that the screen might get a bit too crowded. At least I've aways thought that if I were to make them appear in the game, having them as faeries would make them as very interesting beings. I wasn't deeply involved with FFX-2 but from the impression I got of looking at them as an audience, their positions in this game is how I see them.

---Were you planning to insert FFVII:AC characters into KHII initially?

Nomura: No. I didn't want to insert too many things from my newer works and FFVII:AC's world is very serious and has a little madness mixed into it so it was quite difficult to

familiarize it to KHII's mood. I wasn't thinking of forcing to insert something that wouldn't fit in.

---On the subject of characters, all the mysterious XIII Organization members finally appeared in KHII. Was it you who thought up of their settings?

Nomura: No, I didn't completely decide on everything; a few people were also part of it. But Xemnas as #1 and Roxas as #13 has always been in the initial settings of the creation of the XIII Organization.

---Was there any mentioning of making the members that disappeared in KH:COM to show up as guests in the Coliseum?

Nomura: I did want to do that but I never said it out loud. If the members that died in KH:COM showed up, I would have to think of the details on why they're there, prepare the events and we'll need more work on creating the battles. Some of the staff said "It's kind of a waste since we already have CG models (of them) for the movies" but because of the schedule, nobody would go ahead to do something reckless.I actually like the XIII Organization a lot. Especially Luxord, I like how he's stylish and strangely has a glossy demeanor.

---Looks like Zexion has a lot of fans.

Nomura: Probably because he's quite enigmatic. He's the only member who showed up with no weapons but it's not because he doesn't have his own weapon, it's more of because he died without fighting so nobody knows what's his weapon. I have an idea on what his weapon is and I might have a chance of showing it in the near future so I'll keep it as a secret for now. That reminds me, in the World that Never Was, each XIII Organization member had a gravestone for them and each of those have a picture of their weapons and that's when Zexion became a problem for us. "Eh, we're gonna put a spoiler on Zexion's weapon there!?" (laugh) That's a bit too much so we decided to destroy the gravestone so that his weapon couldn't be seen.

---Previously you said "The members of the XIII Organization have something hidden in their names", can you reveal the answer to us now?

Nomura: Before this I've mentioned that when their names are spelt in Roman alphabets, there will surely be an "X", right? The truth is that when the "X" is taken away, the alphabets that are left behind is an anagram of the members' real names when they were humans. I actually wanted to insert an event scene showing how Roxas got his name. First the word "SORA" popped up and those letters were rearranged into "ROAS" and BAM, suddenly the

"X" got inserted in the middle and he was told "Take this name...." Well, I had an image like that but it was something difficult to do time-wise so I gave up.

---Following the previous game, Utada Hikaru also sang the theme song for this game, "Passion."

Nomura: Many fans seem to have the image Kingdom Hearts = Utada Hikaru so I didn't think of changing that at all. This time I wrote a story explanation for her that's longer than the previous game's. We decided to have it played at the last scene, so for me the theme was "Sora and Riku's reunion." I wrote stuff like "An image of a reunion, a happy moment in a way" and "Like a Hikari 2" in there.

---In the single version, there are phrases like "Seems like a child will be born in winter" and "The New Year's card has a photo attached to it" in it...

Nomura: After getting the finished song, we worked on the movie to make it synchronize with the song, and when we were almost finishing, suddenly I was told "we've made a single version" so I tried listening to it and noticed those phrases were added into the lyrics, so we didn't know about it initially. Come to think about it, if those phrases were added earlier, we would have been brainstorming how to make the movie fit that part of the song. (laugh) I guess it's because Utada-san understood that "Kingdom Hearts" won't be using that part of the song.

---It was amazing on how the ending synchronized well with the song and movie.

Nomura: The first KH's ending also stuck well with the theme song, but this time it was a bit more difficult because the song started with soft piano keys. Before, the scene that synchronized with the start of the song was Sora letting go of Kairi's hand but this time this two would hold each other's hands. In the editing process, we were arguing on how many seconds we should show them holding hands. Someone said "Shouldn't it look better if we show it longer?" but I said "No, we're going to show it for just a split second" so we cut it short enough to just show them holding hands. The external editors told me "you're a really cold person", though. (laugh)

---In the last scene in the ending, they received a letter from the king. I'm quite curious to what's written in it.

Nomura: I was troubled for a very long time on whether I should show the letter's contents or not, and in the end I decided to let people speculate it themselves. You can guess what's in the letter by looking at those three's facial expressions: Sora looking at it blankly, Riku smirking and Kairi looking slightly worried. If it was just a "Hello, it's been awhile", they

would be smiling instead so at least it's hinted it is not that kind of simple letter. Actually, it was planned to have a little more scene to it and by watching it you could tell what's in the letter. I might be able to show that scene when I get the chance to.

---After the ending, there's a secret movie this time, too. What exactly is the movie trying to tell?

Nomura: I actually have a solid idea on what the movie's setting will be in my head. In the previous game's secret movie, I wasn't even sure if I would be making a sequel or not, so some parts of it were quite vague. But this time I already have an idea my head where I think "This is it."

---Did that scene happen in the future or in the past?

Nomura: I would at least say it's an episode in the past, but.... Hmm, how should I say this? It's in the past but you can also think it's in the future, something like that.

---Who are the 3 armoured people?

Nomura: Those 3 are completely new people who haven't shown up at all. In fact, I've already thought of their names. Back when I was making that movie, I only had their settings but now I've even drawn their faces to give myself a clearer image of them.

---The king, Sora and Riku's keyblades were there, too.

Nomura: It's to show that those three armoured people aren't them but that doesn't mean they don't have connections. The words "Keyblade War" that showed up in the middle were to implicate that there were fights between Keyblades. Most of the puzzles in the first KH have been solved in KHII but there are many things about the Keyblade that haven't been revealed yet. A line from the previous game's Ansem Report #8 appeared in the movie but that is to say "It means this but it's not explained yet."

---Does that mean you already have a plot for KHIII?

Nomura: Hmm... I have an idea but it can't be helped because my team are planning to work on our next different title. So we're not working on KHIII now and we're not planning to work on it for some time, too. I have a plot in my head but I'm not sure if it'll be released to the world or just stay in there.

---Well then, is there a possibility for a Final Mix version to be released like the previous game's?

Nomura: Actually, I wasn't planning for KHII to have a Final Mix. In beginning of the project, I wanted to have the English voices inserted, too, but the disc space was almost full and the recording of the English voices got delayed so that plan couldn't be realized.

Compared to FF, there's a high demand for the English version of "Kingdom Hearts". I assume it's because there are many fans who came in through KH:FM so it felt quite weird to play KHII in Japanese when they played the previous game in English. Thanks to KH:FM selling very well, many fans think the English voices are meant for "Kingdom Hearts" so right now I'm in the middle of wondering what to do about Final Mix.

---Seems like many gamers are hoping there will be many extras besides the English voices if Final Mix is ever released.

Nomura: If I were to make it, I'll have to answer to that demand and I shouldn't put it at the same level as the previous game's. But more things have been done for KHII compared to the first KH so I'm troubled on how to make the 'tuning' for Final Mix. We still have to think how to solve the disc space problem, too.

---Since it's you after all, Nomura-san, you probably already started thinking of some plans for Final Mix, right?

Nomura: In fact, I've prepared a very big trump card for it but I can't say what it is yet. It's something to look forward to if I'm able to make it. (laugh) Besides that, I regret not putting the mushroom Heartless in KHII. In the beginning of the project, I had new ideas that I wanted to use for the mushroom Heartless but it was too grand that it would take a lot of time to make so it got cut out. And the result is that not even one mushroom got inserted. A staff kept saying "Something's missing. Something's missing. Oh yeah, there's no mushroom!" (laugh) If we can make a Final Mix, I would like to add the mushrooms in.

---By the way, you seem to be working on the international version now; are you adding anything extra in that?

Nomura: Nope, not much. We're making the North American version in 3 months so localizing(translating) it is pretty much the only thing we can do. After that there's the European version, so if I were to work on Final Mix, it'll have to be after that.

---If that really happens, then that means the different title you're planning to work on will be slightly delayed to be worked on.

Nomura: Well, there are ways to go around it. I already started thinking on that title's plot and character by myself. That title is hidden inside FFVII:AC in a surprising manner, by the way. (laugh)

---Well then, please leave a message to all the KHII players that are reading this.

Nomura: KHII achieved great quality not only because of the development staff's high motivation to not give up, but it's also because there were many voices from the fans wanting

a sequel. Like I said before, the sequel's plot may not see daylight if there's no need for the a sequel, so I'm grateful to you all that I'm able to make KHII. KHII's story has completed but there are still some puzzles left behind, like the secret movie, the king's letter in the ending, the contents of Ansem's reports and so on. Inside me, the story of "Kingdom Hearts" still hasn't ended, so if you're thinking "I still want to keep in touch with this world," then someday that might be realized. Besides that, what made me happy this time is that the people around me told me, "It's quite common to be moved by video games but KHII is the first to give me a warm feeling." The "heart" is the theme of "Kingdom Hearts", so if I get the chance to make a sequel again, I would like to make something that'll stay or appeal something to the heart.

---Nomura Tetsuya - Director and Concept Design

A secret of the game that only he knew

Nomura: "Xehanort's name has two meanings. When you spell it in Roman alphabets and rearrange them without the 'X', they'll spell 'No Heart' and 'Another'. These meanings are connected to the secret movie."

Cecily. (2012, May 5). *Kingdom Hearts II Ultimania Main Nomura Interview*. KHInsider. https://www.khinsider.com/news/Kingdom-Hearts-II-Ultimania-Main-Nomura-Interview-2553. [Archived: https://web.archive.org/web/20250715215249/https://www.khinsider.com/news/Kingdom-Hearts-II-Ultimania-Main-Nomura-Interview-2553].

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Scenario Mysteries

---When was the XIII Organization founded?

Nomura: The timing is when Philosopher Ansem's 6 disciples turned into Heartless. The XIII Organization is called like that just because it has recruited 13 members, but it doesn't matter if it has "XIII" in its name or not. All 13 members were already gathered in KH:COM but the members that were in Castle Oblivion still called it as the "Organization."

---Besides Xehanort, did the other 5 disciples that turned into Heartless disappeared?

Nomura: Not really disappear but more like they're somewhere else as normal Heartless. Xehanort was about the only one who was able to keep a human form.

---In the beginning of the game, there's a conversation between Xemnas and Roxas that went like "I met him. He looks just like you." "Who are you?" at the beach in the World of Darkness. Did this happen right after Sora's fight with the Enigmatic Man in KH:FM?

Nomura: "Right after".... I'm not sure about that but yes, it's after that. In this game it was never stated that Xemnas was the EM in KH:FM but from the way he fights and his line "He looks just like you", I hinted that it was him in KH:FM.

---Roxas asked for Xemnas' name so does that mean that scene shows him meeting Xemnas for the first time and that's when he joined the Organization?

Nomura: Not really. It's true that he had a conversation with Xemnas at that beach before but that's not their first meeting and their conversation wasn't like that either. The conversation at the beginning of the game was Roxas' dream, mixed with his memories and feelings. The part where he asked for Xemnas' name but instead was asked back for his real name was a reflection of Roxas' feelings on who really is. Roxas didn't know his real name, remember? If he remembered that he was Sora, I think he wouldn't join the Organization in the first place.

---Did Namine meet DiZ after Sora's story in KH:COM?

Nomura: Yes, they contacted each other between Sora and Riku's stories. Namine coorperated with DiZ not just because she's against the Organization but also because she wanted to protect Sora. She promised to restore Sora's memories so she needed to stay beside him. As stated in Ansem's Other Report #10, DiZ thought it's dangerous to leave Sora in Castle Oblivion, and in order to protect Sora, Namine needed DiZ.

---Was the Mansion in Twilight Town a property of the XIII Organization?

Nomura: No, they have nothing to do with it. It's just a place DiZ used as his hideout. You saw a lot of pods like the one Sora was in but DiZ just transfered Sora and the others along

with their pods from Castle Oblivion. In other words, DiZ just copied the pods that were created by the Organization and lined them up (in the Mansion). The reason there's a room in the Mansion that looks exactly like Castle Oblivion's was just prepared for Namine, not because that space is connected to Castle Oblivion.

---Please tell us a bit more about the Twilight Town Roxas was in. From Ansem's Other Report #12, there's the line "For the moment, I have converted all of Twilight Town into data, and formed a 'copy of the world' in Sora's memories..."

Nomura: The Twilight Town Roxas was in is the data of the real Twilight Town, inside a computer. The pod Sora sleeps in is connected to a computer and in that computer is a data of that world and the XIII Organization hacked into the computer. It's not that Axel went into Sora's brain, it's actually that the Nobodies invaded the world that's in the computer that Sora's brain is accessing.

---We found out that Riku's Keyblade's name is "Way to the Dawn" when examining his item slots after he joined your party. Is that Keyblade a transfigured version of Soul Eater?

Nomura: I designed it with that image. Since Riku has always been using Soul Eater, he still calls it that even after it changed form. Keyblades aren't something that you can obtain suddenly out of nowhere so in Riku's case, his Soul Eater was used as an intermediary for that Keyblade.

---If we directly translate "Way to the Dawn", "dawn" means "in-between night and daytime", so does that mean that Keyblade is from the In-between World? In other words, this means the Keyblades that Sora, King Mickey and Riku wield represent the Worlds of Light, Dark and In-between?

Nomura: Well, if I have to say where they belong, it's just as you said. But the name of "Way to Dawn" doesn't have to mean that. This name came from the scene at the end of Riku's story in KH:COM that suggested which path he would walk on, where he said "The road to dawn."

---In Ansem's Other Report #13, DiZ had the unanswered question, "How did Xehanort open the door in Hollow Bastion's underground?" but....

Nomura: I can't talk about this yet. But, weeell, it's something you can speculate over, I think.

---Speaking of "opening the door", I'm going to move the subject to the previous game. Why when Riku opened Destiny Island's door, this accidentally called the darkness? Do

the powers of Keyblade wielders that are called "Heroes of Light" are connected to darkness?

Nomura: Currently Sora and co. are the only Keyblade wielders and they're doing things that grant them the titles "Heroes of Light" but, as stated in the first game's Ansem Report #8 and the secret movie this time, the real Keyblade wielders "can bring chaos to the world, just as one can bring peace to it."

---In the World that Never Was, Xigbar said to Sora "Compared to the ones before this, you're weaker"; does that mean he's comparing Sora to previous Keyblade wielders before him?

Nomura: Yes, he was. I was hinting "Xigbar has met other Keyblade wielders before." As for something more than that... I'll leave it to your imagination.

Cecily. (2012, May 5). *Kingdom Hearts II Scenario Mysteries*. KHInsider. https://www.khinsider.com/news/Kingdom-Hearts-II-Scenario-Mysteries-2554. [Archived: https://web.archive.org/web/20250716141516/https://www.khinsider.com/news/Kingdom-Hearts-II-Scenario-Mysteries-2554].

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Nojima Interview

Archive Author's Note: Non-interview content such as introductions, closing remarks, or unrelated images may have been omitted. This entry includes only the translated interview material.

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Resolve the mysteries left over from the previous game based on the "Mystery List"

— How did you first become involved in the KH2 project?

Nojima: When work on FFX-2 was finished, Tetsu (Director Tetsuya Nomura) casually invited me to join. Well actually, it was less an invitation and more like him going "Come on, do it" (laughs).

— You worked on the previous game too, didn't you.

Nojima: I didn't have a lead role, I just came on board to help out in the final stages. I mostly wrote the scenario from Hollow Bastion onwards.

— KH1 left us with many mysteries. Was that your doing?

Nojima: Nah, when I do that it tends to come back to bite me, so I try to avoid it (laughs). I think most of the mysteries of KH1 might have been Tetsu's doing. After my work on the scenario was completed, I remember seeing the finished game and thinking, "Oh, there are a lot of things in here I don't know about." I saw the KHFM secret movie and was also like "Okay… where is this going?" (laughs)

— Did you receive the concept for this game's scenario from Nomura?

Nojima: Yes. I received a plot thought up by Tetsu and the cutscene team, and turned that into a scenario.

For the main story of Sora and Roxas, I was first given a massive plot from Tetsu. I thought, "If this is all it's going to be, it's going to be a piece of cake," even though I hadn't even written the initial scenes in Twilight Town yet (laughs). But Tetsu always has a clear idea of what he wants to do. He relayed his thoughts to me, and then I was free to do the rest.

— What kinds of things did Nomura want to do?

Nojima: He told me he wanted to resolve the mysteries left over from the previous game. Early on, he gave me a "mystery list" consisting of such conundrums. When I asked him, "So, am I supposed to come up with all the answers?" he replied, "It's okay, I've already taken care of a few of them." I thought, "Just a few? You don't even have answers for everything yet?!" (laughs)

There were a lot of keywords that appeared in the secret movie of the last game, so we talked about incorporating them into the scenario as much as possible.

— Was it difficult to incorporate the lines from the secret movie, such as "This time, I'll fight"?

Nojima: Well, I knew from the the beginning that I had to include them, so I tried to weave these lines into situations where someone would say them. Of course, I didn't write the story with the express purpose of making characters say these things. I kept them in the back of my mind, so it wasn't that difficult.

— Sea salt ice cream is an important item in the story. How did this come to be?

Nojima: Sea salt ice cream is something Tetsu wanted to include from the get-go. Originally, I wanted to come up with something to symbolize Hollow Bastion, but since we had the ice cream, I decided to use it as a password for the computer. I decided that Ansem the Wise, who chose the password, is a sea salt ice cream lover, and thought it'd be nice to bring out his human side. Nice adults who like ice cream are kind of endearing, aren't they? That being said, I don't think it's a good idea to use your favorite food as a password (laughs).

— Come to think of it, in the scene where the characters are searching for a password, Leon says, "It's just like grabbing clouds," and Tifa jumps in with, "Grabbing who?" This is because of the overlap between "cloud" (the thing) and "Cloud" (the person), right?

Nojima: I think I wrote that scene when I first came up with that pun (laughs). I generally try to avoid playing around with words like this, because it creates translation problems when working on the overseas version. If it were translated into English, it'd be done straight.
(T/N: In the English version, Leon says, "That means... this is all a wild goose chase." to which Tifa responds, "You're chasing what, now?" The two metaphors share the same meaning, but obviously the English equivalent doesn't involve clouds so we miss out on the pun.)

Two reasons why Port Royal was so difficult

— Were there any differences between creating a scenario based on Disney films and what you normally do?

Nojima: Since there was an original story to work off of, it was probably easier than usual. However, the way I see it, KH is an original IP even though it's owned by Disney. Of course, I have seen the films that the characters in the game originate from.

— Were there any worlds that gave you a hard time?

Nojima: Halloween Town, and I think Port Royal. The Nightmare Before Christmas, where Halloween Town originates from, has a particularly strong musical color compared to other Disney films, and I had to "compete" with it without those musical elements. I can't help but think of it as a "competition" (laughs), so that was tough. It stands out from the rest of Disney's catalogue thanks to Director Tim Burton's dedication to his weirdness.

— And Port Royal?

Nojima: Oh that... My wife loves Pirates of the Caribbean (laughs). So, when I was watching the DVD at home for reference in writing the scenario, she asked, "Why are you watching this?" I like Johnny Depp (who plays Jack Sparrow in the film), so I often watch movies with him in it, but then she asked, "This is for Kingdom Hearts, isn't it?" I feigned ignorance and said, "Who knows?" (laughs) She replied, "I don't care whether it is or isn't, just don't screw it up."

— So the pressure was on.

Nojima: In that sense, yes, it was pretty tough (laughs). Also, I'd heard that Port Royal would have "realistically recreated live-action visuals," but I had no idea what it would actually look like, so I couldn't visualize it the scenes when I was writing the scenario. I had a bit of trouble figuring out whether I should give it a taste akin to FFVII Advent Children (hereafter, FFVIIAC) or FFX, or whether I should go with more of an anime or manga vibe.

— I understand that you also wrote the lyrics to the original songs used in Atlantica's musical.

Nojima: I wrote them while referencing the dubbed version of The Little Mermaid, thinking "maybe something like this...?" (laughs) I wrote the lyrics first this time, but it's easier if you already have the music, because then you'll understand how it flows. Without the music, the rhythm would have to be at 5-7-5, making it difficult to write a song to match. I told them I didn't mind if they changed the lyrics later, but I think it'd be difficult for Shimomura (Music Composer: Yoko Shimomura) to do so.

— But aren't you already familiar with writing lyrics?

Nojima: There's more to it than that. Lyrics can remain in the world on their own, completely independent of the overall scenario, so you can't cut corners. And even with a poor choice of words, a single line still makes up part of a larger story, so it needs to be able to compete with the full might of the package as a whole. However, the lyrics stand alone in the songs, so I have to be careful. That's why, no matter how easy writing lyrics may seem, I'm clawing my way through the dictionaries in my house and putting in a lot of thought.

— How long does it take you to write the lyrics for one song?

Nojima: When I can, I'll write it in a few tens of minutes. However, after writing not just lyrics but scenarios as well, I'll go lay down for a while. I often work late at night, but people tell me "it's not good to write letters at that hour." (laughs) After all, if you don't let yourself rest for even one moment, you won't be able to look at things objectively. This is especially true when it comes to lyrics, as I find that they will often come across as strangely passionate and stick out like a sore thumb, so I review them many times before finalizing. I also read over the scenario at the beginning of each day's work, fixing the parts that catch my attention. Sometimes I don't finish my work for the day because of these corrections (laughs)

The relationship between Cloud and Tifa in KH2

— How did you feel about the FF characters appearing in KH2?

Nojima: They might have been more difficult to deal with than the Disney characters. I didn't know how much I could carry over from their original games. I'd heard vague concepts like "they're the same as the originals, but different," so it was hard for me to grasp the idea.

— Of all the FF characters appearing in this game, who do you have the strongest attachment to?

Nojima: I didn't think I'd be able to use Yuna and her friends again, so I was thrilled to get the opportunity. I thought the FFX incarnations of these characters might appear in other

games, but was under the impression that the vibe of their FFX-2 counterparts would prevent those versions from doing the same. What's more is that, since they didn't have important roles, I was free to use them as I pleased (laughs).

— Do you prefer FFX-2 Yuna over FFX Yuna?

Nojima: No, I like them both (laughs). But if she were a real person, I think I'd prefer FFX. FFX-2 Yuna is too forced, so I find her exhausting. I believe that, truthfully, she'd rather stay home and read books (laughs).

— FFVIII's Seifer, Fuu, and Rai also show up. What are your thoughts about them?

Nojima: That's easy; they just want to be cool. However, their brand of coolness isn't the same as Sephiroth's or Cloud's. They're a little more childish, like they're trying really hard to be cool. That makes them sound charming, doesn't it, coming from someone who's looking in from the outside. I thought it'd be nice if I could bring out the same feeling as the Seifer who laughed so heartily at the end of FFVIII. I was happy to be able to adapt Fuu and Rai as well, but there was the issue with Fuu's manner of speaking (laughs).

— Setzer is from FFVI, right?

Nojima: The original plan was for FFVII's Rufus to appear [in this role]. However, when I was wrapping up the scenario, Tetsu said, "FFVII characters are showing up a little too much overall, so let's go with Setzer." I wasn't involved with FFVI, so I didn't know much about Setzer, but he said, "No, it's okay, you'll be fine." (laughs)

— Tifa from FFVII makes her debut.

Nojima: Actually, Tifa wasn't planned to be in the game at first. Tetsu and I were discussing what Cloud is doing in Hollow Bastion, and we came to the conclusion that while Cloud is chasing Sephiroth, he himself is being chased by something as well. The truth is, Cloud is actually running away from that something, but he purports to be chasing Sephiroth. So we decided that Cloud is running away from "something warm," which what Tifa is after in FFVIIAC.

— Nomura said, "If Cloud's darkness is Sephiroth, then Tifa is light." If that's the case, then what kind of position do you think Aerith has?

Nojima: The way I see it, Aerith doesn't belong to either the light or the darkness. It's sort of like she's in a different realm and can go either way if she so chooses. Rather than being dyed in light or darkness, she is a fully independent existence. To put it in a cool way, she's the most steadfast being to boast both light and darkness.

— What is their "own world" that Sephiroth and Cloud returned to after their battle?

Nojima: This is just my personal opinion, but Sephiroth, Cloud and Tifa in that world are based on completely different standards than Sora, Organization XIII, and the Heartless. So "their own world" does not refer to Midgar or anything like that, but rather something along the lines of "their rightful place." Fighting as they do in KH2 isn't right for them. The thing is, Cloud should be in the world like Tifa says, or perhaps he should have been there all along. It's kind of abstract and difficult to explain, but it's not about a specific location, but rather the state of mind... It's the feeling of not having to fight.

The themes of the scenario are "friendship" and "fantasy"

— What theme is this scenario based on?

Nojima: As you know, there are themes like "light and darkness" and "heart," but in terms of my scenario writing, it is the "friendship" between Sora and Riku. I think I had one like theirs when I was a kid, but that kind of relationship is not easy to have. I wanted to write about that kind of friendship head-on, one that might be a little embarrassing in real life.

Kingdom Hearts is, in many ways, a story about passionate people. They stand up and save the world, rescue their friends even as they themselves are falling into darkness — everyone expresses it differently, but they've all got a fire deep inside... But I digress. I just wanted to make sure the idea was conveyed properly.

— Which parts of the scenario strongly reflect your intentions?

Nojima: The parts where Roxas's friends are involved, not just at the beginning of the scenario, but also midway through. I also wanted to properly depict the process of revealing that there are two Twilight Towns. I'm glad that I was able to include everything I had in mind, such as the scene where they hold the crystal balls up to the light and gaze through.

I have found that, in the FF series as of late, the number of "things that can't be explained by mere logic" has been steadily decreasing. But in Kingdom Hearts, there are still elements that have a sense of fantasy, such as light and darkness. I wanted to cherish that "innocence," rather than follow the trend of "this is how it works." Conversely, if I had not done that, this game may have gone down the same route as FFVIIAC, which I was also writing at that time (laughs).

— What do you consider to be the characteristic of your scenario?

Nojima: Hmm... the padding? (laughs) Well, I do take care to make sure that if I look back on it 10 years from now, it won't look dated. Ideally, rather than making it fit just right at the time of release, it should be enjoyable to both those in the present and future. I enjoy hard rock, but when I listen to songs that have been around for 30 years, I don't feel they are that

old. On the other hand, when I listen to music that were products of their time, for example, songs that were popular in the 1980s, I think, "Wow, that really takes me back." That's not what I want from my writing. Instead, I'd like to create something that will have the same effect at any given time.

That being said, another characteristic of my scenarios is that you can't throw a straight pitch through it (laughs).

— What exactly do you mean?

Nojima: Even if it's obvious, I won't be satisfied unless I include a development that says "this is how it really happened." This is because I've been writing game scenarios since the beginning [of my career], rather than working in TV or film.

Games take a long time to play, so I try to include a lot of fun things. I thought, if I do that, then it'd be impossible to throw a fastball right down the middle from beginning to end.

— I see.

Nojima: If I had to name one more characteristic, it'd have to be the last word at the ending. It may not necessarily be said at the very end, but I like to conclude with words that are commonplace and used in everyday life, such as the "I'm back" and "You're home" used in this game, "thank you", and so on. To offset this, if there are lines in the story that make me think, "I would never speak like this," then I'll just leave them be. The director who has me writing the scenario for them has to be prepared for such things (laughs).

— By the way, about this game's secret movie...

Nojima: I haven't seen it yet (laughs). Well, I'm sure there's still room for a sequel. For example, the story of the Keyblade itself. We still haven't talked about the will of the Keyblade, or the history from its creation to when Sora takes it in his hand. Not only that, but there's also a very broad subject called "light and darkness." There's plenty of room for more stories to be written.

— The secret movie is very much expanding on the story of the Keyblade.

Nojima: Oh, really? Well then, no doubt that's what they're doing (laughs).

— Finally, do you have a message for the readers?

Nojima: I think this every time, but the Kingdom Hearts development team really is amazing (laughs). Even if they encounter obvious difficulties, they're able to overcome them. To tell you the truth, when I first completed the scenario, I thought, "If it's this long, they won't be able to develop it in time to meet the deadline, so we'll probably have to make cuts," but everything managed to go through. "It all made it in. That's amazing." I was so impressed.

With a development team like this working on the game, I think KH2 is even intense than its predecessor. I hope that everyone will challenge that intensity head-on as they play the game.

Secret of this title that only he knows

I'd decided that I wouldn't have the characters saying lines that were difficult for me to say. When I was writing the dialogue, I actually mimicked them out loud to make sure everything would work, but doing so for Mickey and Donald proved to be difficult.

Sign. (2022, June 21). *A Look Back: KH2 Ultimania, Nojima Interview*. KHInsider. https://www.khinsider.com/news/A-Look-Back-KH2-Ultimania-Nojima-Interview-19030. [Archived: https://web.archive.org/web/20250716141951/https://www.khinsider.com/news/A-Look-Back-KH2-Ultimania-Nojima-Interview-19030].

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Event & Movie Team Interview

Archive Author's Note: Non-interview content such as introductions, closing remarks, or unrelated images may have been omitted. This entry includes only the translated interview material.

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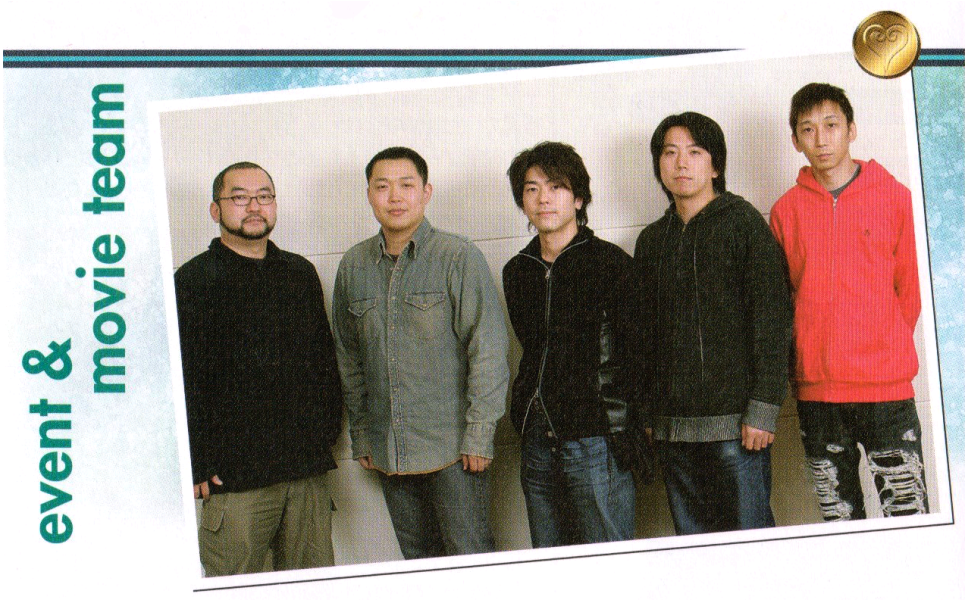

T/N: "event" refers to in-game cutscenes, "movie" refers to CGI scenes like the opening and ending.

Interviewees:

Masaru Oka, Planning Director: Event

Tomohiro Kayano, 3D Modeling Director: Character

Tatsuya Kando, Animation Director

Tomohiro Hasegawa, Art Director: Texture

Takeshi Nozue, Movie Director

Two stories for each world, bringing the total number of events up to nearly 800.

— Compared to the previous game, KHII has considerably more event scenes.

Oka: In KH1, after clearing Hollow Bastion, it was like "Alright, let's go through the worlds again!" If we were going to follow a similar structure this time around, I thought it'd be more fun to have a proper scenario for the second visit, rather than just defeating a boss and calling it a day, so I suggested that we have two scenarios for each world. At the beginning, we had prepared tools for event production, so it seemed like we wouldn't have to spend as much time working on each one. I was confident that we'd have enough time to make both scenarios, but by the time we actually got around to doing it, there were nearly 800 events (laughs).

— Among the events, the nature of Atlantica's musical was different and memorable.

Oka: We'd actually been talking about adding musical elements to KH since its inception, and finally decided to make it happen this time. When we thought about which world to incorporate it into, we determined that Atlantica from "The Little Mermaid" would be the best fit. We didn't want it to be a half-baked production, so we made it a full-length musical, including the battle with Ursula.

Kando: It was very difficult to create motions that matched the music and songs in the musical. The button prompts branch into two types of motions depending on whether you've succeeded or failed, so we had to make sure both of them would connect smoothly. For that reason, I focused on creating movements that would go with the flow of the music.

— Regarding the graphics, are there any technical changes from the previous game?

Kayano: When it comes to the modeling, our policy from the beginning was to use the KH1 models, so we couldn't make major changes. Instead, KH2's models were designed to solve the issues that plagued those older ones. In particular, we've cut down on the number of skeletons (framework for movement), reduced the number of polygons without compromising on the visual quality, and made efforts in areas that aren't outwardly noticeable.

Hasegawa: As for the textures, rather than doing something that was technically new, I feel that we've achieved what is the most beautiful out of anything we've done on the PS2.

Kando: We made a lot of facial models (face models used to animate facial expressions in close-up scenes of the characters). There must have been about 100 of them in total.

Oka: I requested a lot of them for the events. When I asked and they said "Sure," I couldn't help myself (laughs).

Kayano: We wanted to use facial motion in any scene that gets even the slightest bit of close-up.

Kando: Using facial motion suddenly makes the screen look better. CG tends to look like a puppet show, so the use of facial motion has a tremendous effect in adding a human touch.

Hasegawa: When facial motion evolves significantly, the difference between a "high model" (a model with a higher polygon count used in scenes where the character is close up) and a "middle model" (a model with a lower polygon count for lighter processing) becomes much more noticeable. That's why we significantly increased the number of texture animations for the middle model this time around. Otherwise, the moment the model changes to the middle model, it will suddenly appear to have a face with no facial expression. As part of this

process, the middle model's facial expressions change during battle, such as closing their eyes when taking damage, and adopting a brave look when attacking.

Disney is impressed with the amazing reproduction of the graphics!

— Among the newly introduced worlds, Port Royal caught my attention as a world with realistic textures thrown into a cartoony setting.

Kando: For Port Royal's graphics, the concept for the visuals was "Who Framed Roger Rabbit." I wanted to express an "interesting gap" in the game with live-action people and animated characters coexisting.

Kayano: I studied Port Royal's film of origin, "Pirates of the Caribbean," by watching it countless times and collecting magazines with articles about it.

Kando: As for Jack Sparrow, we had many discussions to make sure he'd look and move like the actor. When he saw the test version we had made, he replied back saying, "It's wonderful!" From then on, the staff at the office became even more excited.

Hasegawa: The direction of the graphics for this world and FFXII is similar, so I told myself, "I'm not going to let them beat us!" It was something I was very conscious about. FFXII does a great job with hair and beards, so I approached it with enthusiasm and strived to be just as meticulous here.

Oka: We've devised a little bit of camera work for Port Royal, creating an atmosphere akin to a live-action movie with a cameraman. If you watch closely, you will see the camera shake from time to time.

— The appearance of the undead pirates changes when they're illuminated by moonlight. How are those visuals achieved?

Hasegawa: There are actually two models - one that depicts the pirate as flesh and blood, and the other as a skeleton - overlapping with one another, but one is left hidden. When the pirate is exposed to light, the skeleton fades in, and when it gets dark, the flesh and blood fades in, making them look like they're transforming. However, the effects couldn't show up properly when they were layered on top of each other, so it was difficult to make adjustments.

Oka: We checked and adjusted each frame until we were satisfied. Because of those efforts, I think we were able to successfully recreate the scene where Jack Sparrow is stabbed by a sword and staggers back as he transforms.

— A lot of new characters appear in this game, but who was particularly difficult to work with?

Kayano: First and foremost, all of those characters in the black coats (laughs). We initially planned on making only three types of models or so, because it would be more efficient to work on them later if we didn't have to change the framework too much. However, once we started production, we decided to just make different models for everybody. We made slight adjustments to their heights, builds, length of their sleeves, etc., to give all thirteen a unique look.

— The new Nobody enemies are quite unique in their design and movements.

Hasegawa: Fundamentally, the silhouette being round and comical is a characteristic of the Heartless, so to contrast with that, the Nobodies were given sharp lines with gouged curves. The original request was for "something scary with a bit of intelligence," to differentiate the Nobodies from their more endearing counterparts. Additionally, we tried to distinguish them from the brightly colored Heartless by giving the Nobodies achromatic colors and a metallic flavor.

Kayano: Normally, the Modeling Team creates a skeleton with a certain degree of movement in mind, and the model is used as is. However, in the case of the Nobodies, the Motion Team wanted them to move in peculiar ways. In order to achieve this, after we gave them a model and its skeleton, the Motion Team were given free rein to adjust said skeleton however they pleased.

Kando: Thanks to them, we were able to be quite adventurous when creating the movements. First, Nomura came up with the design for the Dusk, and based on that, I wondered, "What kind of movements would a non-existent person have?" I tried making it move and then playing the animation backwards, or animating it in such a way that the original design remains constant. It took a lot of hard work until we arrived at the unique movements we have today.

Realizing high-quality movies with the know-how cultivated in FFVII AC

— I was also surprised by the high quality of the movies. Did you receive any technical feedback from FFVII Advent Children (henceforth referred to as FFVII AC)?

Nozue: Actually, the tools I used for lighting (illuminating characters and the entire space) in FFVII AC were able to achieve what I wanted to do in KH1. This time, I was able to use those tools, so it felt like my greatest wish had come true. I was also able to express the texture of the characters' skin, which was something I'd been thinking about since the first game. The characters have an air of softness about them, so I wanted the movies to have a similar vibe that wouldn't be so CG-esque.

— I was surprised that the ending scene, where Sora begins to read the letter on the beach in the Realm of Darkness, switched to a movie without feeling jarring.

Oka: It worked out pretty well there, didn't it?

Nozue: I was very nervous about that (laughs). It may have been the most difficult part of the movie. I was concerned about the timing and visual consistency, since it led directly from an event. The real-time (actual in-game) graphics were in close proximity to the shore of the Realm of Darkness seen in the KHFM secret movie, so we used that as a reference and made adjustments so that things wouldn't look out of place.

— After that, we have the customary secret movie. What kind of instructions did Nomura give you for production of this movie?

Nozue: That there are people like this, doing things like that... That's about the extent of my knowledge. Well, I've gotten used to making things without understanding anything after the last time (laughs).

Hasegawa: I went to Nomura and asked, "What kind of material is the armor made of?" He replied back, saying, "I imagine it more like crystal than steel." He also told me that he intentionally does not want to show the characters' faces. I think it's the same case as the blindfold and hood that appeared in KH1's secret movie, with the armor being used to conceal them.

Oka: If there is a next time, we'll have to make events to go along with that movie. I had a hard time figuring out how to incorporate the contents of KH1's secret movie into KH2, but this one... I have no idea what's going on (laughs).

Hasegawa: I'd like to be able to recharge my batteries for once (laughs). I get a very strong impression from KH2 that it's the result of us doing what we set out to accomplish. I'm quite satisfied with it because we were able to pack in just about everything we wanted to do without making cuts. But I'm sure that after some time passes, I'll come up with other things that I would have liked to do.

Kando: I've had the honor of being in this Disney world two times in a row, so I'd like to try something wicked now. Perhaps a game where only old men appear (laughs).

Secrets of this title that only they know:

Oka: On the 6th day of Roxas's episode, when "THE 6th DAY" appears on the screen and birds fly past the window, Roxas turns into Sora for a split second. It's only a couple of frames, so watch closely.

Kayano: Roxas and Sora's facial models are, for all intents and purposes, practically identical, but their chins are slightly different. Roxas looked a little chubbier when we added the hair, so we made his chin thinner.

Kando: During the scene in Port Royal where Elizabeth pats Will's face, the facial motions make him tremble in response to her touch. We were very particular about it.

Hasegawa: There are Magic Brooms in Disney Castle, right? You can't really see it, but the water in their buckets are animated with ripples.

Nozue: Well, lemme present it like in Hey! Spring of Trivia. "In the secret movie, there are a myriad of swords where the people in armor are gathering. Among them is one of Cloud's swords that was scrapped."

Sign. (2022, June 27). *A Look Back: KH2 Ultimania, Event & Movie Team Interview*. KHInsider. https://www.khinsider.com/news/A-Look-Back-KH2-Ultimania-Event-Movie-Team-Interview-19014. [Archived: https://web.archive.org/web/20250716142611/https://www.khinsider.com/news/A-Look-Back-KH2-Ultimania-Event-Movie-Team-Interview-19014].

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Sound Team Interview

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Interviewees:

Yoko Shimomura, Music Composer

Takeharu Ishimoto, Synthesizer Operator

Asako Suga, Supervising Dialogue Editor

Ryo Inakura, Sound Designer

The keywords for Twilight Town's songs are "twilight" and "dusk".

— What was the concept behind the music for this project?

Shimomura: After initial discussions with Tetsu (Director: Tetsuya Nomura), we decided to proceed with the notion of incorporating a variety of new songs while maintaining the worldview of the music in KH1. He also asked me to rearrange the returning songs from that game, rather than leaving them as they were. To avoid inadvertently changing their original image too much, I kept the songs fundamentally the same, but if you listen to them carefully, you'll notice that they've been slightly rearranged.

— Regarding the music of the new worlds, what did you have in mind when you were composing them?

Shimomura: Let's take Beast's Castle, for example. The game depicts it with a slightly darker atmosphere than the film, so I tried to keep the original atmosphere intact while

blending it with the visual imagery [of the game], creating a song with a "dark ball" kind of feel.

If the songs in any of the worlds were too far removed from the films, fans of those works would get the impression that things are a little off, so I had to be very careful.

— Which world did you have the most difficulty with?

Shimomura: The world was originally introduced in KHCOM, but it's Twilight Town. Tetsu had a strong image of the song in his head from the very beginning, so even though I submitted it to him thinking, "This has got to be it!" he never gave me the OK. I spent a long time stewing over it, and the one that came together at the last minute was the one that was finally adopted.

Tetsu said he wanted a dusk or twilight feel to it. Something along the lines of "a kind of wistfulness that one feels when one's day ends at dusk, like an indescribable sense of nostalgia. However, it doesn't lean in the direction of sadness, but rather has an atmosphere that makes you feel like you're in love."

— How many songs did you make before you got approved?

Shimomura: (Turning to Ishimoto) Around three?

Ishimoto: No, there were more. I received the data from Shimomura and let Nomura listen to it from my side, but many times he'd just say "It's a good song, but..."

Shimomura: Ishimoto did his best to console me. He'd say, "I thought it would work this time." (laughs)

— Ishimoto converts the songs created by Shimomura into data for playback, correct?

Ishimoto: That's right. I wasn't involved in the previous game, so I recreated all of the tones and data from scratch. Of course, I did so on the premise that they'd sound cooler than they did in KH1, so I hope everyone feels the same way.

Shimomura: To give you an idea, there were many times when Tetsu would tell me, "Make this part more wild." I'd just pass the buck and say, "Well, I'll just have Ishimoto make it with wild sounds and he'll take care of the rest."

Ishimoto: That's right, I remember. He'd say things like, "I want it to sound a little more gorgeous, more resplendent" (laughs).

— In the previous game, you used live saxophone for the music in Traverse Town. Did you do anything similar this time around?

Ishimoto: As a matter of fact, the saxophone used in the first Twilight Town song was played by the same person who contributed to Traverse Town. There are also songs like Broken Highway, which plays during Gummi Ship segments, that use live guitar and base.

The growth of the characters and their voice actors overlapped realistically.

— Speaking of the music, one of the main attractions this time is the musical in Atlantica.

Shimomura: Of those five songs, the first, last, and Ursula's are the ones I made. Creating these songs for the musical was difficult because the lyrics had already been decided. When lyrics are written first, the melody tends to be rather simplistic, so I had to think about how to make it sound engaging. Even after completion, we had to fine-tune it to fit the range of the voice actors' singing, which was quite a challenge.

Ishimoto: I think Shimomura had a hard time recording the songs. For instance, she had to be prepared to lower the key by one note in case it was too high for the voice actor to reach.

Shimomura: That's why, when they actually sang them in the studio, it felt like all my hard work had finally paid off.

— In regards to the other worlds, I was surprised that Timeless River sounded so clunky.

Suga: Since it looks completely different from the other worlds, I thought it'd be better to alter its sounds as well, so I brought it up to the sound effects supervisor. Through a lot of trial and error, we managed to come up with sounds reminiscent of old black-and-white movies.

Inakura: We substituted environmental sounds (ambient noise) for sounds of film reels spinning and other noises. We also used musical instruments to express sound effects, mimicking the direction of animated cartoons from that era. For example, we used the xylophone for walking sounds, and cymbals for impact sounds.

— Speaking of sound effects, the footsteps in Space Paranoids were also intriguing.

Inakura: Those were made to resemble the effects in the original film. For this world, we tried to make things sound evocative of computers from the 70s and 80s, just as they were in the film. However, it was quite difficult to create sound effects that matched the atmosphere of each world like that. Especially since this time, we had worlds like Pirates of the Caribbean and TRON where the characters were played by real people, not animated ones, so we had a hard time making sure our effects were not only similar to the films', but also sounded live.

— There are also a lot of sound effects when the characters move around.

Inakura: We created separate hit sounds and wind cutting sounds for every Keyblade. For the hit sounds, we used materials that suited each Keyblade's world of origin. For example, Port Royal's Keyblade (Follow the Wind) uses coin sounds, while Timeless River's Keyblade (Monochrome) uses musical instrument sounds. Some of them don't make you feel like you're actually damaging the enemy (laughs), but it's fun to fight with your favorite sounding weapons, rather than solely being concerned with its attack power.

— How many sound effects did you make?

Inakura: The number of sound effects in KH1 was limited by the game's specs, but this time there were no such issues, so we created tens of thousands (laughs). In particular, we made a considerable number of them for events, which apparently exceeded more than 20 hours in total. If you look at that runtime in terms of film, it'd be longer than 10 films.

Suga: There are more than 120 characters in speaking roles, resulting in 2x or 3x the amount of voiceover than that of the first game. It took about 7 months in total to record them all, and due to scenario changes along the way, we often had to add or cut dialogue, making things rather difficult to manage.

When we asked the voice actor for retakes of lines they had recorded at the beginning, they were confused, saying, "Huh? You sure I already recorded that line?" (laughs)

— The voice actors for Sora and Kairi are close in age to their characters, and their growth since the last game was well represented.

Suga: That's right. Miyu Irino, who plays Sora, was 13 or 14 years old when we recorded for KH1, and about 17 when we recorded for KH2. I think it was right around the time his voice changed, and it did so rather pleasantly, so it was very impressive to see his real growth.

Risa Uchida, who plays Kairi, was a junior high school student when we recorded for the first game. Now, she too is in high school and has become more mature, which shows in her performance. Her lines in the flashback scenes in Twilight Town are the same ones from the original game, so you can tell very clearly how much she's grown when you hear them.

— Are there any lines that you're particularly attached to, Suga?

Suga: When Sora leaves Twilight Town, there's a line where he says, "You know... I'm sad." I remember the exact moment when we recorded it. It was such a great read that everyone, including the sound director and the Disney producers who were present, were impressed, letting out an collective "Ohh!"

The staff roll and epilogue songs that have become a culmination of the music to date.

— What did you have in mind for the ending theme when you were composing it?

Shimomura: The ending itself uses a song by Hikaru Utada. For the staff roll that follows, I was asked to do a march-like song with an orchestra, like in KH1. I'd originally heard that the story would be completed with KHII, so I wanted the song to be like an assortment of the music we've done since that first game (laughs), or a reminder of the songs we've played so far. So, I added various songs here and there, such as the chorus song that became the basis of KH1, as well as the beginning of the melody of KH1's ending theme, creating a composition that, when played in its entirety, would make the audience feel like, "Oh, it's all over."

— Destiny Islands's theme plays in the epilogue, after the staff roll.

Shimomura: That's actually the version used in KHCOM, which I'm quite fond of it. There was no song specified for that scene at all, so I wanted to use Destiny Islands's theme since it was completely absent from the story, and I wanted to record it with live audio. After that, another song from KH1 - Traverse Town's battle theme - is played. Since the same song was used in KH1's epilogue, we decided to not only follow suit, but record it live as well. In the end, they turned out to be gorgeous productions, thanks to the live orchestra (laughs).

— Sora and Kairi's exchange in the ending, "We're back" and "You're home", is quite memorable.

Suga: Sora, Riku, and Kairi's voices were recorded in chronological order as much as possible, and with the actors actually together in the studio. That's why we didn't record the ending until the very end. However, the cast had been involved since KH1 and were very emotionally invested, so things came quite naturally for them.

Inakura: When it comes to the sound effects, I'd like players to pay attention not just to the ending, but also the final battle leading up to it. Since Sora and Riku have grown up quite a bit since KH1, our approach was to create sound effects with a more mature image. However, for the normal worlds, we had to keep things in line with the atmosphere of the original works. In that respect, for the final battle where only Sora and Riku are available, their sound effects have a more mature feel, as though they are taking down the enemies with a great sense of urgency.

— What about the song in the secret ending?

Shimomura: I was only asked to include a memorable phrase in the song somewhere; the rest was left entirely to my discretion. Since the video has a completely different atmosphere from the rest of the game, I decided to give the song the same treatment and disassociate it entirely from the game's image. However, in my mind, the piano plays an important role in

the melody of Kingdom Hearts, so I put a little bit of it midway through the song to retain that nuance.

That song was recorded with an orchestra, but I actually had them play it while watching the video.

Ishimoto: In addition to the live orchestra, I also mixed in synthesizer sounds to complete the piece.

Shimomura: Ishimoto handled the prep work for this as well. Nevertheless, orchestra recordings are done early on due to the schedule. That's why it's hard to say "Well, that's a wrap" when the ending is complete, as we still have loads of songs that still need to be done (laughs).

Secrets of this title that only they know:

Shimomura:

The chorus I used in the previous game was a "cursed song" that always caused trouble when I was working with it. This time, when I played the song at home, the breaker tripped and the water was cut off... I don't want to touch this song anymore (laughs).

Ishimoto:

I used live guitar and bass for the song that plays on the Gummi Ship highway, and asked Tsuyoshi Sekito and Keiji Kawamori of THE BLACK MAGES to play them.

Suga:

When we recorded Xigbar's voice, Nomura redrew the character's outline and jawline on the spot to match the voice actor's disposition and vibe. I'd never seen that happen before, so I was very impressed.

Inakura:

The sound effects for Cloud, Tifa, and the others are the same ones used in FFVII Advent Children. Listen and compare the sounds of their clothes rubbing against each other, their swords clashing, and when they take damage.

Sign. (2022, June 27). *A Look Back: KH2 Ultimania, Event & Movie Team Interview*. KHInsider. https://www.khinsider.com/news/A-Look-Back-KH2-Ultimania-Event-Movie-Team-Interview-19014. [Archived:

https://web.archive.org/web/20250716142611/https://www.khinsider.com/news/A-Look-Back-KH2-Ultimania-Event-Movie-Team-Interview-19014].

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Battle Team Interview

Archive Author's Note: Non-interview content such as introductions, closing remarks, or unrelated images may have been omitted. This entry includes only the translated interview material.

—

Interviewees:

Yuichi Kanemori, Planning Director

Kentaro Yasui, Main Programmer

Tatsuya Kando, Animation Director

Syuichi Sato, Art Director**:** VFX

The controls themselves remain simple while providing the player with more options.

— How did you decide what to change from KH1 to KH2?

Kanemori: We made adjustments to the parts that couldn't be elaborated on when we made KH1, in order to make things even easier to control. The biggest thing was the Δ button, which is now being used to execute reaction commands. The command window was necessary to make more options available to the player, but as the number of commands grow, some people will find it difficult to manage the selection. This time, we've made it possible for players to select specific commands using only the Δ button, so even though there are more types of commands than in KH1, I think we've successfully managed to increase the number of options available to the player during battle without also increasing the number of times needed to use the directional keys to get to them.

Yasui: Based on my experience with KH1, I knew that we were going to have a hard time, making a bunch of additions at the end of development (laughs).

I created a tool to make it easy for the lead planner to add skills and make minor numerical adjustments. In an action game, there are many parts that need to be adjusted once the game is actually playable, so if we had to use a program to directly process skill behaviors and whatnot, it'd require a lot of back-and-forth between Kanemori and myself. Doing it this way would inevitably cause us to take too much time when we tried to create a large number of techniques, like we did for this game. That's why we left it to Kanemori to make these minor adjustments.

Kanemori: We were able to tweak the values while actually running the game, so I was able to make adjustments right up until the very last minute to ensure that each ability performed exactly as we envisioned it, from the dwell time of Sora's jump to the speed of his weapon swing.

— There sure are a lot of abilities. Which ones do you recommend?

Yasui: Finishing Plus is pretty good, even though we put it in there as a joke (laughs).

Kanemori: It is pretty cool, isn't it? I came up with that ability after we finished making all of the other moves, more or less. I just thought it'd be neat if players could perform one finisher, and then immediately follow up with another.

Yasui: Abilities do tend to be made on a whim like that (laughs).

Sato: The only things we figure out in advance are stuff like the names.

Yasui: Negative Combo is another ability we talked about in jest, at the beginning.

Kanemori: It seemed like something that'd be fun to have, so I thought I'd just put it in for the time being, but...

Yasui: Surprisingly, it does have many uses.

Kanemori: Dodge Roll, an ability that was in the original game, has been left out of this one, but the reason isn't all that deep. I removed it rather nonchalantly, thinking it won't be needed this time around. I was surprised to find that many people actually missed it.

— The summon roster has changed since the last game. How were these four characters chosen?

Kanemori: Lilo & Stitch was a fairly new movie back when we first started development, so there were a lot of people asking for Stitch within the company. We made the decision to include him at a very early stage.

As for Chicken Little, when we were trying to decide who to choose as summons, we found ourselves struggling to find the perfect fit. I thought, in that case, it might be interesting to use a character from a movie that hadn't been released yet.

Kando: It was a spur-of-the-moment decision. Since it's a brand new movie, we didn't have any material to work with, so I had to watch the trailer over and over again to make the motions (laughs).

Kanemori: Genie is inherently able to transform, so we wanted to try and make use of that skill. Originally, we planned to have him transform into a martial artist or a guardsman. In the end, various aspects proved difficult to realize, so after some back and forth, we decided to settle on Form Changes.

Peter Pan was chosen because he was a popular character in the original game. The item used to summon him is found in a treasure chest in Port Royal, which offers a "connection" through the shared use of pirates.

Representing growth in motions to match the growth in appearance

— What changes have you made to the characters' battle motions?

Kando: Even if the characters' appearances haven't changed too much, we've completely remade their internal data. Take Sora, for example. He's now able to wield Keyblades in both hands. Also, in KH1, I tried to highlight the energetic and childish qualities in his movements, but seeing as he's grown up since then, I've added a sense of coolness to them. However, I've limited the extents of it so that his movements aren't as cool as Riku's (laughs). The characters' proportions have gotten bigger, so to match the growth in their appearances, their internal growth is also expressed through their motions.

— Sora adopts many different poses when he undergoes a Form Change.

Kando: The poses for Valor and Wisdom were decided at a relatively early stage. However, when it came to Master and Final, it was difficult to envision swords and magic being wielded simultaneously, so we came up with various ideas and went through a process of trial and error. Anti-Form was handled by the staff who created the original motions for the Shadow in the first game in order to get an idea of how the Heartless move, so I think we were able to capture that vibe well.

— Have you made any major changes to the effects compared to the original game?

Sato: In KH1, each effect was created separately, but this time we established a number of themes. For example, Nobodies have an edgy design with an overall sharp image, so when they appear or attack, the effects resemble thorns. Donald's limits have a fireworks theme, so

we made the effects look like fireworks and skyrockets. In that sense, I think they all go quite well together.

— Some of the effects that you were asked to do must have left you wondering, "How am I supposed to express this?"

Sato: The only thing I remember is that I was always troubled, so I can't really name anything in particular (laughs).

Kando: The number of reaction commands and limit effects increased at a rapid pace. I guess it's a prime example of something that has no ceiling (laughs).

Sato: I knew from the initial plans that the number would increase, so I went ahead and made the effects that I expected to be used, before anyone had even asked for them. Like, "We're going to have potions, so..." (laughs). That being said, it's impossible to get them all done in advance. Reaction command-related effects can include as many as 230 different types for a single boss enemy, so... I'm glad we were able to get everything done in time.

Yasui: As with abilities, the motions and effects were made into tools so that they could be added and adjusted by their respective staff. For example, when it came to effects, we had each member not only create the images for them, but also work out how they'd be implemented into the game, such as how a particular gimmick would appear when executing an attack, what direction something would bounce in when it hits a wall, etc. It may have taken a lot of work, but in doing so, I think we were able to achieve exactly what we envisioned. It was a lifesaver for us programmers, but the whole process was fairly give-and-take (laughs).

— We've talked about the things that've changed since the first game, but what about the elements unique to Kingdom Hearts that you've retained?

Kanemori: We were particular about the versatility in movement that could be achieved with just the O button (T/N**:** X in the overseas version). If the same move is performed every time the O button is pressed, the game would be rather monotonous. Also, I think it was a good idea to make KHCOM inbetween KH1 and 2, rather than jump directly to KH2. KHCOM was made for a completely different hardware (Game Boy Advance), right? Yet in spite of this, I think we were able to successfully replicate the same feeling of playing a Kingdom Hearts game, as well as the core controls that the series is known for.

Games are not defined by their hardware or systems. I believe the most important part of the KH series is to have a sense of control that feels good to anyone from the moment they pick up the controller.

"Horde battles" are achieved by mixing effects in with real characters

— When I first saw the 1,000 Heartless "horde battle" in Hollow Bastion in the trailer video, I wondered if such a thing could actually be realized...

Yasui: I thought so too (laughs). But then we showed it in the trailer .

Sato: It's often the case that you show off footage for something first and later find yourself having to commit to it (laughs)

Yasui: After the trailer was released, Tetsu (Director**:** Tetsuya Nomura) asked me, "We're moving forward with the premise that there will be a horde battle. Is that alright?" We hadn't had any meetings prior to discuss it, so we just started experimenting with various ideas. We were able to figure out how to tackle it fairly quickly, but it took a lot of hard work and adjustments to make it look like you're actually fighting a large number of enemies. Specifically, enemies in the distance are displayed as part of the effects and mixed in well with real characters nearby.

In other words, rather than focusing on actually showing all 1,000 enemies, we simply devised a way to make it look like you're fighting a lot of them.

Kando: For the enemies in this horde battle, we reduced the number of polygons and skeletons (framework that moves the character) in order to minimize the amount of data as much as possible. For example, in the case of the Armored Knight, whose design combines its right arm with a sword, it only has four skeletons in total**:** two on the legs, one on the torso, and one on the right arm attached to the sword. At first, I was worried about whether it'd be able to move properly with so few skeletons, but being a humanoid, I think it manages to work pretty well. And for the Surveillance Robot floating in the air, there are two skeletons**:** one on the torso, and one on the disc circling beneath it.

— The series of battles with Xemnas, the final boss, is quite amazing. At the proposal level, I would have thought it wasn't feasible, but you actually managed to make it work.

Kando: Regarding the Xemnas battles**:** when we were in the latter stages of development, Nomura said he wanted to fight against the city itself. At first I thought it might be a bit of a stretch, but everyone started coming up with loads of ideas, so I said, "Alright then, let's do it!" We were getting real pumped up about it, and then Nomura said, "You're actually able to do it? I just thought it'd be nice if you could" (laughs).

Sato: As the leading effects staff, it was such a large-scale battle that I hoped they wouldn't do that again. The enemy was so large that effects couldn't be applied to it, not to mention the battle itself had special specifications, so my team had a pretty hard time with it.

Yasui: For the shot of Sora and Riku fighting on the ship, the programmer who worked on the Gummi Ship provided me with a lot of know-how, such as how to present the scene to make things easy to understand in a 3D shooting space, which was a great help.

— Based on what I've heard, you started making the Xemnas battle around the end of August?

Yasui: We worked on it until about the end of October.

Sato: And by the time we finished making the effects for it, it was November (laughs).

(T/N**:** KH2 released in Japan on December 22, 2005.)

Secrets of this title that only they know:

Kanemori: Roxas can also learn Finishing Plus. Since it requires leveling him up to almost LV50 at a minimum, few people will actually use it, but it has been properly balanced.

Yasui: Every time you lose a battle during the investigation of the Seven Wonders in Roxas's chapter, the damage he inflicts is doubled, tripled, and so on, while the damage received is halved. This is a safety measure for those who are not good at action.

Kando: Bulky Vendor's reaction command was originally a different one altogether. I said, "What's the point of having a gacha machine if you can't turn the handle?!" and made them add an action to do so.

Sato: In the beginning, there was an item called "Hero's Medicine" that restores the Drive Gauge during battle, which I created the effects for. It wound up getting scrapped, but I still have the data close at hand.

Sign. (2022, July 28). *A Look Back: KH2 Ultimania, SoundTeam Interview*. KHInsider. https://www.khinsider.com/news/A-Look-Back-KH2-Ultimania-Sound-Team-Interview-19028. [Archived: https://web.archive.org/web/20250716143820/https://www.khinsider.com/news/A-Look-Back-KH2-Ultimania-Sound-Team-Interview-19028].

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Nomura Interview

---About the new KH title that will be announced after summer this year (2007), will that be a direct sequel?

Nomura: Hmm...I'm not sure how much I can say (laughs). I'll start of by saying that it's not Kingdom Hearts 3.

---So this game will be a side story?

Nomura: That's right. My own feelings are that I would like to give Sora a break from large adventures for a little while. So I'm thinking of making the next game's story focus on other characters.

---So by a little while, do you mean that Sora's journey from Kingdom Hearts 2 hasn't finished?

Nomura: Yes. If you're talking about the mysteries that started from Kingdom Hearts 1, then those were all revealed. In the ending of Kingdom Hearts II, there was a scene where Sora received a letter from the King; for Sora, I would like you to consider this as a new beginning. The truth is, until the very end, I was considering whether or not to include a scene showing them setting off on a journey after reading the letter.

---So, let's talk about this new story, which doesn't have Sora as the main character. What sort of story will it be?

Nomura: Well, I need to start with the story depicted in a Birth by Sleep. Aside from that, there's the story of how the King found his keyblade in the world of darkness and other things like that. Myself, one of the things I most want to do is to give Roxas more of a role to play. I think it would be interesting to flesh out more of the year he spent between his birth and disappearance. Or making Riku the main character, and writing about his desperate fight while Sora was asleep, and things like that. You get the impression that Riku summoned Roxas to a place of shadows, and that Riku is a master of shadows, so I would like to give him more exploration in the game.

---Will there be anything different in the game system?

Nomura: I'd like to try something a little different to the previous games in the KH series. I'm not just talking about the next game, more about the next project, so I can't say that it will

just be one game (laughs). For the Kingdom Hearts series, being made with our company and Disney, both companies have things in mind that we would like to make reality, so there's always at least two things we want to do.

---What platform does it look like the next game will be released on?

Nomura: Hmm... Probably a hand-held platform. Right now we're working on titles for the PSP (FFVII Crisis Core), Nintendo DS (This Wonderful World) and for mobile phones (MONOTONE), so I wouldn't be surprised if it were on any of those platforms.

---Is there any chance that this game may be released on multiple platforms?

Nomura: We haven't considered that in the development. If possible, I would like to make a system that suits the platform. But in contrast, in terms of ideas, I would want ideas that could be released on any platform.

---The more I hear about the next game, the more exciting it sounds, but for the fans the first thing to do is to see KH2 Final Mix's secret movie isn't it?

Nomura: Yes. I'm worried that we made the conditions for getting the secret movie too hard, but through reading this guide, I hope the readers will be able to see the secret movie. Finding a way to defeat (the new boss) is tough, but I've seen it done, so I know it's not impossible (laughs). If you're able to see the new secret movie and turn your thoughts to the next Kingdom Hearts, I'd be very happy.

Cecily. (2007, May 13). *Kingdom Hearts Final Mix+ Main Nomura Interview.* KHInsider. https://www.khinsider.com/news/Kingdom-Hearts-II-Final-Mix-Main-Nomura-Interview-2557. [Archived: https://web.archive.org/web/20250716161853/https://www.khinsider.com/news/Kingdom-Hearts-II-Final-Mix-Main-Nomura-Interview-2557].

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Scenario Mysteries

In [KHII FM+], many mysteries are answered but many new mysteries are also born. In this version, thing relating to additional scenes are included, but during the story there are some questions that pop up, so we'll see if Nomura can't point us in the right direction.

---In [KHI], the King searches for a keyblade in the realm of darkness, but when he meets Ansem the Wise, is the realm of light keyblade he has the one that Sora is currently using?

Nomura: No, the King has the ability to use keyblades from both the Realm of Darkness and of Light. This is an important point, there isn't just one keyblade from each world, just as many as there are people with qualified hearts.

---During the meetings, the members of Organization XIII are sitting in chairs. Is the height of these chairs determined by things like their skills and abilities?

Nomura: No, the height of the chairs is not fixated, they move. That is to say, the height is up to each person. The leader, Xemnas, is always the highest and to be at the same height as him would have a pretty bad feeling, so the other members wouldn't do that. (laughs)

---In the end of Sora and Riku's stories in [KH Re:CoM], Roxas looks back while Hayner and the rest are walking and eating ice cream, and without seeming to care, Hayner and the others continue walking. Is this because they can't see Roxas?

Nomura: Well that, it's just because they don't know Roxas that they don't notice him, not because they can't see him. At that time, right after Xemnas explains Roxas' name, Axel says to leave things to him. Then, Roxas seems jealous of how Hayner and the others are enjoying themselves while eating ice cream, and Axel interprets this as him wanting some ice cream, so he is obliged to go buy him some.

---In the real Twilight Town, didn't Roxas cross paths with Hayner and the others and make acquaintances with them?

Nomura: I suppose. You can think whatever you want about that.

---What triggered Roxas' seperation from the Organization?

Nomura: Because he kept having recurring dreams of Sora, someone he didn't know, he felt he needed to leave the Organization to find out who these people he didn't know were. Because Axel didn't want him to go, he didn't tell Sora about Roxas in Castle Oblivion, did he?

---In Riku's ending in [KH Re:CoM], could you tell us the meaning of the scene where the King and Riku are walking together and Riku suddenly plops down.

Nomura: That's because Riku realized he couldn't completely get rid of the darkness inside of him. The King mentioned it in [KHII], that because Riku held Xehanort's heartless in his heart he disappeared from the King's sight. It's a sort of foreshadowing. In this scene, the King's face looks worried for a moment because he felt that Riku might eventually no longer be there. Riku headed towards Diz in order to restore Sora's memories to normal, but in the end his departure from the King was so he wouldn't show his preparations to use the darkness.

---Could you tell us at what point Riku covered his eyes?

Nomura: When he departed from the King. You don't know after the scene, but in Riku's ending in [KH Re:CoM], when he comes to wherever Diz is, he's already covered his eyes.

---Please confirm some things about Castle Oblivion. In KHII FM's additional event "The Truth about the Chamber of Sleep", you can gather from Xigbar and Zexion's conversation that Castle Oblivion existed in the Inbetween Realm before the birth of the Organization. The Organization then found it and used it for experiments about memories and to look for the Chamber of Awakening, right?

Nomura: Yes. Since their conversation was about Marluxia's entry, they discovered the Castle before that. In fact its use, according to the Other Ansem Report 7, was for only 13 Organization members. Namine awoke in Castle Oblivion, but because she and Roxas were born at the same time, half of the Organization moved to the Castle.

---In KHII FM's additional event "To Put an End to Everything", Sora says "It should have been easy to say thanks to Namine, but I couldn't say it". At this point in time, does Sora remember the things that happened with Namine?

Nomura: If he remembers, it's because Namine's existence was made possible by Sora, and when Namine and Roxas return to Kairi and Sora, many things were connected. Since Sora never got to say thanks to Namine, please think of that as a hint.

---In the additional event "Farwell to a Friend", there's a scene where Axel tells Roxas "You really do have a heart, don't you". What is the actual case here?

Nomura: In this scene, it ends bringing up more mysteries about Roxas, so for the answer, maybe take care to follow your hunches well, it's also related to Xehanort's memories, but I can't give any specifics now.

---We'd like to inquire about the new secret movie "Birth By Sleep". In the new event "The Truth about the Chamber of Sleep", Xigbar mentions a "group that wields keyblades". Is he talking about the 3 armored people in the movie?

Nomura: Yes, Xigbar witnessed them when he was a disciple to Ansem the Wise.

---The Lingering Sentiment is the same as the armored youth in the movie, but when he fights Sora he mentions "Aqua" and "Ven". Are those the names of the other 2?

Nomura: Yes, the blue haired girl is Aqua

---What is the armored youth's name?

Nomura: His name appeared once in code in the 2006 Tokyo Game Show Promotional Video. Also, Ven is actually a nickname, his real name is a little bit longer. Sora, Riku, and Kairi's names can be seen as "Sky, Land, and Sea", the 3 armored people's names take the shape of different properties of the world "Water, Wind, and Earth".

---Ven looks an awful lot like Roxas...

Nomura: I can't give any specifics about that. He may just resemble him, and if there is a connection, Sora may be related too. What I can say right now is that these mysteries are all connected to the story.

---In the beginning, the armored youth's eyes are blue, but at the end they change to gold. Is this revealing a change in him?

Nomura: I can't give specifics about this either... I think everyone's imaginations are pretty capable so please try and anticipate a lot of things.

This is the code that flowed across the screen for a moment during the Promotional Video. It can be decoded as "Master Xehanort's Avenger, his name is Terra. Not yet awakened, he is connected to those two."

Cecily. (2007, May 13). *Kingdom Hearts Final Mix+ Scenario Mysteries*. KHInsider. https://www.khinsider.com/news/Kingdom-Hearts-II-Final-Mix-Scenario-Mysteries-2555. [Archived: https://web.archive.org/web/20250716162347/https://www.khinsider.com/news/Kingdom-Hearts-II-Final-Mix-Scenario-Mysteries-2555].

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Director's Secret Report XIII

Archive Author's Note: Non-interview content such as introductions, closing remarks, or unrelated images may have been omitted. This entry includes only the translated interview material.

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Translator: **Goldpanner**

DIRECTOR'S SECRET REPORT XIII

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Translations: Goldpanner

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ABOUT THE WORLD OF KINGDOM HEARTS

"At present, I think there are four broad stories you could say are blank."

I. In the Kingdom Hearts (hereon KH) series so far, two kinds of 'Kingdom Hearts' have appeared, the 'heart of worlds' and the 'heart of people'. Can you please explain their makeup?

I think of 'all life has heart' as the most basic premise of KH. The heart of worlds was a great heart that gathered everything that formed those worlds: the natural things such as the trees in the forests, the oceans and rivers, the flowers and such. The heart of people, as it is called, was the collected hearts of the humans and animals and such that lived in those worlds. A Kingdom Hearts is considered to be an aggregation of the originally invisible 'proofs of life' known as hearts.

II. Please explain the structure of and means by which one may travel between the worlds that serve as the setting of Kingdom Hearts.

As for the structure of the worlds, first, the so-to-speak normal worlds--the ones that Sora, the Disney characters and we live on--are situated in the Realm of Light. If you picture those

worlds as existing on the same level on top of a giant plane, then on a separate level, in other words on the reverse side, exists the Realm of Darkness.

Regarding the Realm Between, four worlds have appeared so far: (A) Castle Oblivion, (B) Twilight Town, (C) Yen Sid's Tower, and (D) The World That Never Was. You can think of them as arranged like a stairway extending between the two Realm layers, something like Light < C < B > A > D > Darkness. There are two ways to travel, one of which is to use a Gummi Ship like Sora and his friends do to move through the 'Ocean Between', the space studded with all the worlds. Worlds are encased in an invisible shell which keeps the individual world from being breached by other worlds, but when the door to the heart that exists in each world is opened, the shell covering that world is broken, and it rains down as a meteor shower. The meteors, fragments of that shell, result in Gummi Blocks for Gummi Ships. Gummi Blocks have the ability to breach any world as they were originally part of the world-covering shells.

The other way is to use a 'corridor of darkness'. These routes are like a loophole of sorts and not pathways that should rightfully be used. While only those known as beings of darkness and beings of between are able to create entries and exits, in rare cases even other kinds of beings such as the Beast and DiZ, who held strong sentiment or hatred in their hearts, have been able to open a path themselves. However, this means being near the darkness. Make frequent use of the pathways and the darkness will completely erode one's body. Sora and his friends have also used these pathways a handful of times, but you could consider that the effect of passing through a corridor of darkness is influenced by the strength of one's heart, and as such they have not used them to the degree of frequency that their hearts could have been stained by darkness. In which case, why hasn't erosion by darkness progressed in the heart-lacking Nobodies, King Mickey or Riku, despite them having used the pathways frequently? There is a secret relating to a feature they all share, explained in this very title.

III. Is there a possibility that blank points in time and settings that haven't been shown in detail such as the 'Realm of Darkness' etc will be depicted in the future? Was the beach that appeared at the beginning and end of KHII the 'Realm of Darkness'?

At present, I think there are four broad stories you could say are blank: 'King Mickey's period of absence'[1], 'Riku's period of absence'[2], 'Roxas' days with Organisation XIII', and 'Xehanort's past'. In that case, 'King Mickey's time of absence' would be a story set in the Realm of Darkness. I have been considering over and over how I ought to tell these four stories, so perhaps someday they will be told in some way.

That place that appears at the beginning and end of KHII, called the Dark Margin, is the tip of the cape of that world, and it is not strictly part of the Realm of Darkness but a boundary-like place between Darkness and Between. This means that in the ending Sora and Riku are looking at an ocean in the Realm of Darkness from a beach in the Realm Between. This also means that the scene of the door appearing in the ocean of darkness at the end was symbolic of Sora's 'deep down, there's a light that never goes out' line from the first game.

IV. There are also many things regarding Castle Oblivion that remain mysterious. Did Organisation XIII build that castle themselves, with Naminé the original subject of the experiments they conducted there? Please tell us the details of the experiments the Organisation were carrying out. Also, was that pod that Sora entered something the Organisation built in relation to those experiments? Are they the same pods in Twilight Town?

The ultimate goal of the Organisation was to obtain a Kingdom Hearts of the hearts of people and become complete beings, and because Nobodies were a new kind of being beyond all expectations, said to be 'nonexistent beings', the lack of background knowledge made it necessary for them to collect information relating to their own condition. One major feature of the Nobodies is that they form personalities and feelings through memories without hearts. This means that 'memory' is a very important element to them. The creation of Castle Oblivion itself is still a mystery, but, as you can guess from the cutscenes added to this title, you may consider that the Organisation discovered the castle, which was there since before the Organisation was created, at quite an early stage.

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[1] Could this mean the story from when, in the first Kingdom Hearts title, King Mickey leaves the letter and departs from Disney Castle up until he closes the door to the heart of the worlds from the Realm of Darkness?
[2] We surmise that this refers to the wandering journey Riku took through each world when he was in Ansem's form in Kingdom Hearts II.

And also, around the same time that Roxas woke up in Twilight Town, Naminé woke up in Castle Oblivion. This means that after was found by the Organisation after that. Just as each Organisation member has an attribute ability, Naminé possesses the power to manipulate 'memory', and they thought that this ability was the key to illuminating the truths of the condition of the Nobodies. This means that in that place that affected the 'memory' of those who entered they carried out experiments relating to memory. Above all, Xemnas, the leader of the Organisation, seemed to be searching for something important related to 'memory'. Some of their experiments involved the breaking and rebirth of memories, and those pods were for that purpose indeed created by the Organisation. The pod that Sora woke up in in Twilight Town was the same one from Castle Oblivion. DiZ had moved everything as it was in order to escape pursuit by the Organisation. Also, as Xigbar says in a cutscene added to this title: when the time comes to reveal the details of 'the true purpose of Castle Oblivion', all the mysteries regarding Castle Oblivion will be solved.

ABOUT THE KEYBLADE

"The fact that the two of them can dual wield actually means something very important."

V. We believe there are still many mysteries surrounding the Keyblade. As of now we have been able to discern three types of Keyblades: Keyblades of the hearts of worlds of light, such as the one Sora wields, Keyblades of people's hearts, such as the one Riku made from the hearts of the princesses, and Keyblades of the hearts of worlds of darkness, such as the one King Mickey obtained in the Realm of Darkness. We would like you to explain each of these.

Keyblades may have one of two make-up; light-side, or dark-side. That is not a 'good or evil' classification, however. Like interior versus exterior keys, the only difference is merely from which side they are able to work. The door of each world is normally closed, the keyhole itself in an invisible state. These keyholes, which appear when a Keyblade is held up to them, are not locked. This means that once the Heartless find a door it is very easy for them to open it and steal the heart, which is why Sora went around locking those doors in the first title. Keyblades were also used for a purpose different to any prior intentions or reasons - on the door that opens on the heart that stands as the gathering of the world's hearts, Kingdom Hearts - to guard against the darkness leaking from within that heart. In order to do that, the door had to be shut from both the side of light and the side of darkness, which required the use of Keyblades from both the Realm of Light and the Realm of Darkness. That is why King Mickey went to get a Keyblade from the Realm of Darkness - to serve as the counterpart to Sora's Keyblade of the Realm of Light.

Then, as for the Keyblade made from the hearts of the princesses that Riku wielded in the first title, it was designed from the special hearts of the princesses purely for the sake of the plan to make the keyhole appear in Hollow Bastion and force darkness to flood from that heart. It was different from the original Keyblades. There are also hints that Keyblades are artificial, people-made objects.

VI. Please explain Riku's newly obtained Way to the Dawn and the Keyblade Kairi wields, and tell us about the conditions of becoming a Keyblade Wielder.

There isn't just one Keyblade for the side of light and one for darkness. There are as many keyblades in existence as there are hearts qualified to wield them. At this stage, the only requirement that has been made clear is that someone must have a 'strong heart', but there are other requirements that haven't been spelled out yet which I plan to reveal another time when I have the chance. Riku's Way to the Dawn and the Keyblade Kairi wields are of the same nature as Sora's Keyblade. However, what with one having developed with the Soul Eater as intermediary and one having been handed to Kairi by Riku, I would like you to think that something not fully explained, outside the usual method of acquirement, is going on here.

VII. If Roxas was born and joined the Organisation during the same period that Sora became a Heartless, then that means Roxas was using a Keyblade during the same period that Sora was using one in Castle Oblivion. Was he using Sora's Keyblade? It seems that Roxas was valued within the Organisation for being a Keyblade Wielder, and surely it would have been handy for them to have Sora, another hero of the Keyblade, gathering hearts. In that case, why did the Organisation try to defeat Sora?

The Keyblade Roxas used was the same one that Sora lost temporarily in Castle Oblivion. And then the two of them were using that Keyblade at the same time, which is accounted for by the relationship between Roxas and Sora if you think about it. However, the fact that both

of them are dual wielders actually means something rather major. This is connected to the story of 'Xehanort's memories', and I cannot touch that topic with a ten foot pole right now.
Also, while the two of them were both using that Keyblade, the Organisation were trying to use Sora for the sake of their own end goals. Before long, however, due to different expectations held by different Organisation members and the actions of Sora and Roxas themselves, their methods changed, and in the end they became unable to use Sora in any real way. Sora getting in the way of the Organisation's actions in this way is what caused them to try to defeat him. You could also say that they were thinking that even if they were to defeat Sora, they had a replacement.

ABOUT THE CHARACTERS

"The plot so far should have made you feel that Xemnas was also a special Nobody."

VIII. When you defeat Heartless, what happens to the hearts they have stolen? Also, when Nobodies and members of Organisation XIII are defeated, do they return to their original forms?

When a Heartless is defeated, essentially, the owner of that heart returns to life somewhere in the Realm with the body that had once disappeared. Some facts about where hearts go were also established in KHII, but those were exceptional circumstances brought about by the Organisation[3]. However, there is the rare case in which a body changes into a Nobody. If that has happened, without the vessel it ought to return to the heart will go into a suspended state.
When a Nobody is defeated, it's a little complicated. If the heart has been released they will return to their original form as mentioned above, but if the heart is still dispossessed by a Heartless, the Nobody will be swallowed by darkness. If their heart, wherever it is in the realm, could be taken back perhaps they could return to their original human form.

IX. Now we will ask about the main characters in general. Why can Sora turn into the Anti Form? Why was Riku chosen by the Keyblade? What of Kairi's memories of Radiant Garden? How are Roxas and Naminé different from other Nobodies? And, while Sora and his friends were gone, what happened to their school, their friends, and their parents?

[3] In Kingdom Hearts II, many of the hearts from defeated Heartless were absorbed by a Kingdom Hearts of the 'hearts of people'.

You can consider the time Sora turned into a Heartless as the reason he can change into the Anti Form. Actually, it is more natural to think that on top of the existence of his Nobody, there would be more effects remaining from Sora becoming a Heartless. Perhaps using too much strong power will bring him closer to the darkness, just like Riku's Dark Mode. As for why Riku was chosen, there is an indirect hint hidden somewhere in the material added to this title, so please see if you can find it. As for Kairi's memories, there isn't anything particularly special there. Try thinking back to your own memories from when you were five years old - I'm sure you don't really remember that many details. In other words, I think she does and doesn't remember things on an ordinary level.

The fact that Roxas and Naminé are special Nobodies is already explained thoroughly elsewhere, so please read that for the details. Essentially, when someone with a strong heart has their heart stolen and becomes a Heartless, there is a rare chance that the flesh body left behind will turn into a Nobody. However, these two have a special case - Kairi's heart had been hidden in Sora, and Sora himself was also purified of his Heartless state by Kairi. Sora's revival, which doesn't follow the usual script, meant Roxas and Naminé were born in a special way, making them left-over Nobodies of sorts. Furthermore, you should have felt from the story so far that Xemnas is also a special Nobody.

Lastly, while Sora and others were gone, time had stopped for the people on the world of Destiny Islands - on the night of the storm in the first game, the Islands were wiped out. After that, the only reality for them for the year that Sora slept was that 'Riku vanished on the night of the storm', as all their memories of Sora himself had disappeared. Those memories inside them of Sora did return when Sora awakened, but in the end their memories regarding Sora simply matched those of Riku - that they had both vanished ever since the night of the storm[4].

X. We believe that in KHI Ansem (Xehanort) abandoned his own heart. However Organisation XIII, led by Xemnas (Xehanort), sought to regain their hearts. Is this because the two of them - split as Heartless and Nobody - became different people with separate intentions? Also, despite the fact that Xehanort, who serves as their base, was meant to have

[4] However Kairi alone, due to the effects of being absorbed into Sora's heart that time, strongly felt it in Kingdom Hearts II.

lost his memories, in one of the scenes added to this title, there was a part where he insinuated something about the past. Does that mean his memories have come back? Or does it mean his memory loss was a lie all along?

Both of them share a true nature, but they were acting upon separate intentions. It is true that Xehanort abandoned his heart, but at that time Nobodies being born was probably completely outside his expectations, and the different natures of Heartless and Nobodies meant different methods for his goals, too.

However, I think that both of them shared the same desire to be a 'complete being'. I left a new mystery hidden in the last 'Secret Ansem Report', written by Ansem the Wise. The key phrase that symbolises this mystery is 'Xehanort's Memories', in which hides a secret with huge implications for future KH titles. I still cannot reveal anything concerning the content or state of his memory.

ABOUT THE KEYBLADE WAR AND FUTURE DEVELOPMENTS FOR KINGDOM HEARTS

"Once you've experienced the new Kingdom Hearts titles for yourselves, please try reading this book once more."

XI. We'd like to ask for a few more details regarding the key phrase 'the Keyblade War'. Does it have anything to do with the 'fairy-tale of the children and the light' told by Kairi's grandmother[5]?

In order to tell the story of the Keyblade War we need high-spec, high-volume hardware, and we ourselves need to gather the know-how to deal with that hardware. There are also other episodes we need to show before we can tell that story, so I won't be able to give details for some time yet.

As for the fairy-tale that Kairi heard, that too requires a little more time before, like a fairy-tale you've all heard, I can make it feel real for you. In other words, if I can't talk about either of these things until later, it's certainly not unlikely that they are relevant.

[5] In Kingdom Hearts, Sora personally experienced Kairi's memories. There was a scene where Kairi, still little, listened to her grandmother tell an old legend. It was about children who remade the world from fragments of light after it was swallowed by darkness.

XII. 'Birth by Sleep', the new secret movie added to KHIIFM, was extremely significant - and some of the people who appeared seemed familiar. Even if you can't give details, can't you give us any hints? Also, do the three who appeared in armour have any connection to Xemnas, who appeared in similar armour in the last battle?

There are familiar figures, and familiar faces - this secret movie is incredibly difficult to reach, but I think it is a considerably impressive movie that stirs up the imagination. There is some kind of connection to Xemnas' armour, but of course I can't answer in detail at this stage. However, this movie marks the rise of new premonitions, so please think that the motives and foreshadowing of the figures and such we've seen so far will connect up ahead.

XIII. Lastly, is this the last adventure for Sora? You've said that you have the end of Kingdom Hearts in your head, but will Sora be there? And, please give us a hint concerning the future developments of the series within the limits of what you can say at present.

There is a summary of the remaining questions mysteries of the KH series so far collected in this book - from that, I don't think Sora's journey is over. If you watch the end of KHII, I think you will feel those new premonitions. I can't say anything more about the 'end' of KH that I spoke of before, of course, but I don't think Sora would be unconnected to KHIII, if the numbered titles reach that far. So, I think Sora will be relevant right up to if we wrap up Kingdom Hearts.

As for the new developments, there are several in the works. I believe they will answer the needs of KH fans, from whom we receive extensive support. I dare label them as 'new' - please think of them as different streams rather than part of the main flow. I'll give you a hint regarding the content of one of them. In the newly added secret movie appear these words: destiny is never left to chance.

In the near future, once you've experienced the new Kingdom Hearts titles for yourselves, please try reading this book once more. I'm sure you will be able to connect many of the dots. I will be so happy if the fans enjoy themselves when the time comes. First, as you look forward to the coming announcements, please play this title to your hearts content.

Arielle. (2015, January 18). *A Look Back: Director's Secret Report XIII*. KHInsider. https://www.khinsider.com/news/A-Look-Back-Director-s-Secret-Report-XIII-4883. [Archived: https://web.archive.org/web/20250716162854/https://www.khinsider.com/news/A-Look-Back-Director-s-Secret-Report-XIII-4883].

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Kingdom Hearts Character’s Report

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Character's Report Vol. 1 Translations

Archive Author’s Note: Non-interview content such as introductions, closing remarks, or unrelated images may have been omitted. This entry includes only the translated interview material.

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King Mickey

We had decided long ago that as Mickey is the most special among all the Disney characters, and as we gave him the role of King in KHI, we would make him by far the strongest character in the game. On the directing side of things, we placed focus on having a mysterious and majestic atmosphere surrounding Mickey rather than just the general cheerful and bright figure. My favourite scene has to be the one where he throws off his coat. One of the charms of the KH Mickey is his coolness, and I think that's the scene that highlights it the best.

--Nomura

Donald Duck

If Mickey is the king, then following medieval fantasy tradition, his two retainers must be a knight and a magician. Then, I simply thought it would be very cute to hear Donald's voice casting spells, so I made him the magician. Disney had the opinion that as Donald was the one with the temper he would better suit the knight role, but the image of Donald casting spells was already complete in my head, and nothing could change it. Please take note of the zipper on his hat. It actually goes in a spiral shape, so if you were to undo it his hat would become one long piece of cloth.

--Nomura

Goofy

With Donald as the magician, then that meant Goofy had to be the knight, but I just couldn't picture him wielding a sword or axe… So, I came up with the premise that he was the 'weapon-hating captain of the knights' and had him carry a shield. Disney told us they wanted him to be wearing traveller's clothes, and as a way to have him fit in with Sora's style I thought of goggles, and from there I developed the rest of his outfit. Story-wise, one scene

that left an impression on me was in KHI, when he put himself out there and told Riku that he wouldn't betray Sora. I think that's the first time you really feel like Sora, Donald and Goofy are together as one.
--Nomura

Pete

I actually wanted to put him in KHI, but we already had plenty of villains and adding any more would have created too many loose ends, so I gave up. That did mean that in KHII as Maleficent's henchman he fitted extremely well into various worlds and played a full and active role for me. Personally, I thought the part in Timeless River when he met and fought with his past self in particular was very funny. I was worried that Disney wouldn't let me portray him that way… so I was very happy that they considered our intentions and gave us the OK.
--Nomura

Sora

In KHI, I tried to keep an emphasis on roundness in my designs to have them fit with the Disney universe style, but in KH2 I took it upon myself to try incorporating some sharper elements. Also as Mickey himself made quite a few appearances, I had to re-think the balance of the colour schemes. Sora, personality-wise, is an nice, honest kid. He simply doesn't sweat the details. He just goes, 'whatever,' and makes things work (laughs). When he gave everyone a smile before thrusting the Keyblade into his chest in KHI, and when he cried upon seeing Riku again in KHII are scenes that left a deep impression on me. I think one of his charms is how straight he is in showing his emotions.
--Nomura

Riku

In contrast to Sora, he's a character with a shadowy, real sort of coolness to him. He worries about a lot of things, and out of all the characters he may be the closest to a Final Fantasy protagonist. And outwardly, too, I deliberately made Sora the kind of hero I pictured when I was little, while Riku fits with what's popular with young people today. Riku has an endless number of impressive scenes, doesn't he. In particular the scene in KHI where he tells Sora to take care of Kairi from behind the door to darkness left a strong impression, but I also love

and empathise with his line from the opening of the game where he says 'just sitting here won't change a thing'.
--Nomura

Kairi

Kairi, who was a tomboy in KHI, became a little bit more mature in KHII. She changed a lot outwardly since at that age girls grow a lot faster than boys, but her lively personality didn't fundamentally change. Enough that 'with Riku and Sora gone, right now Kairi is the strongest person on Destiny Islands' is an actual premise. I like the scene in KHI, when she watches the sunset with Sora, and tells him not to change. I thought it showed very well her anxiety and loneliness over how as we get older we find a distance growing between us and our close friends.
--Nomura

Roxas

A lot of thought was put into this character. Based on the premise that he was 'an expression of the reverse, hidden inside Sora', I gave him pretty much the exact same face as Sora, just with slightly narrower eyes. And then, I made white the basis for his clothes, in contrast to KHII Sora. The black and white checkered pattern, 'neither darkness nor light', was to be a hint. My absolute favourite scene of his has to be the one at the end of the opening of KHII, when he says 'looks like my summer vacation is over'. I put a lot of feeling into creating that, as I intended it to feel, for a moment, like the end.
--Nomura

Namine

I gave Namine the same face as Kairi. Also, in order to emphasise the 'fragile little girl' side of her, I made her outward appearance very pale, as though she might fade away any minute. She had a complicated birth that differed to proper Nobodies and could even be placed as a subspecies, which contributes to her extremely ephemeral atmosphere… but, there is that moment where she and Kairi get into a fighting stance together. I was pleased by that. I thought, you're going to fight??
--Nomura

Wonderland

Alice isn't the daughter of any royalty, so-to-speak, but as being a princess in a Disney work means being a heroine with a heart as noble as a princess, I chose her to be one of the women with a heart completely lacking darkness. In the game it ended up that she had an image of being trapped, from beginning to end in Wonderland and in Hollow Bastion (laughs).

--Nomura

Halloween Town

A scene I particularly liked from this game was when Jack made an entrance in KHI, and when the revived Boogie tells Maleficent he's not going to do things her way. I was also happy that I could genuinely reproduce the part in the movie where Jack wears a Santa costume.

--Nomura

Timeless River

I knew I wanted to use Mickey from the early days of Disney. But as I wanted to protect the mysterious atmosphere around the King, after a lot of vexation, I decided to treat him more like a mascot than go into too much detail depicting the past. I love it when Mickey bounces around shaking your hand in the town from Gulliver Mickey, and when smoke comes out of Pete's hat.

--Nomura

Atlantica

I wanted to introduce musical mini-games in KHII, so I was very glad to have Ariel sing Part of Your World for me. She was great, anyway! It was a stage upon which you could enjoy the music of Disney to your heart's content, wasn't it? I feel as though we succeeded at making it look as though the characters were singing in realtime.

--Nomura

Monstro

Pinocchio was just wandering around aimlessly for the entire game, so perhaps you felt like telling him to sit still (laughs). He's the kind of character you somehow just can't hate, isn't

he. I wanted his nose-growing shenanigans to be even more exaggerated, but it was too hard in the end… At the very end of KHI he became a human, so he won't be able to appear in the series any more, which is a bit of a pity.
--Nomura

Pride Land

Actually, The Lion King is my favourite Disney movie of all time. It made me so happy to be able to include it as a world in KHII and recreate lots of scenes from the movie. When we were making the scene where Scar tells Simba the truth, I was flooded with the feeling that it was just like the original.
--Nomura

100 Acre Wood

In both KHI and KHII, the part where the cover of the picture book is completed at the end makes me cry. Pooh himself doesn't realise that he won't be able to see Sora and the others again--which is far too upsetting. I feel like I really am a child, or something. It's very difficult to write dialogue for those peculiar characters. Each time I work very hard to give them their particular, odd voices.
--Nomura

Goldpanner. (2014, July 16). *Character's Report Vol. 1 Translations*. KHInsider. https://www.khinsider.com/forums/index.php?threads/characters-report-vol-1-translations.195560/. [Archived: https://web.archive.org/web/20250716112141/https://www.khinsider.com/forums/index.php?threads/characters-report-vol-1-translations.195560/].

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Character's Report Vol. 2 Translations

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Leon

I think the 'swordsman who guides Sora' role that he originally appeared with carried over nicely into KHII. I like the scenes in both KHI and KHII where he gives Sora advice and sees him off on his journey. I'd like for him to keep on becoming more of a stoic swordsman from here on out.

--Nomura

Aerith

She is the most motherly of all the FF characters. Even in high-tension scenes, once she appears things calm down. That's how healers are, isn't it? If I get the chance to have her appear again in the future, I want to try even harder to show not just her healer side, but also how she's not as innocent as she acts.

--Nomura

Yuffie

It was easy to make her work as a character playing a part alongside the leader-type Leon and the motherly Aerith. Also, while I re-designed Leon and Aerith to fit in better with the world of KH, I kept Yuffie the same as her original FFVII counterpart.

--Nomura

Cid

You don't really expect a genius mechanical engineer to have such a dirty mouth, which I find funny. Then again, I didn't think he'd get the chance to work with such high tech devices (laughs). Many FF characters appear in Hollow Bastion, but I personally think it's only such a safe place thanks to Cid being there.

--Nomura

Cloud

Just as the characters of the Disney words retain their personalities from the original works, he is the one with the most FF-feel left to him. It wasn't fully explained, but in this title we see through him a side to the state of light and darkness that Sora cannot intervene in. His troubles with light and darkness served the role of giving Sora an objective point of view.
--Nomura

Sephiroth

He was written as a symbol of Cloud's darkness, and it's possible that just maybe he was not a corporeal human entity at all. Perhaps the sequence of scenes involving them made players feel like they were being left behind, but I'd like you to think of that as a representation of a light and darkness that Sora, and thus you as players, cannot intervene in.
--Nomura

Tifa

As a symbol of light, like Sephiroth, it's possible that she too was incorporeal. That last scene where she goes off to search for Cloud, you could say, is a metaphor for how Cloud's light still hasn't lost him, even though he's disappeared off with his darkness, and it is trying to shine on him again… I'm pretty sure I didn't manage to get all that across very well.
--Nomura

Yuna Rikku Paine

This is an example of me trying to represent FF characters differently to Leon and the others. This time they ended up making a test-run level group appearance, but if I had had enough resources, I wanted them to appear in even more of a villain role. If I have to elaborate, I think it would be funny and interesting to put them on Maleficent's side.
--Nomura

Maleficent

She is my personal favourite of all the villains. She did end up helping Sora and the others at the very end, but of course that by no way means she has become one of the good guys. Rather, it did nothing but show her in the process of becoming even more important. Chapter two for her begins here, perhaps.
--Nomura

Xemnas

He started out more as a handsome, romantic-lead type character, but his voice actor has a little 'out of control' side sometimes, and the voice shaped the character into who he is now. But, now I wouldn't be happy with Xemnas any other way. I liked the way he said 'it seems we must begin anew'. I use that line myself sometimes.

--Nomura

Xigbar

His role definitely did change thanks to the voice actor. [In Japanese] he has a way of ending his sentences with 'is what I'm saying', which was originally a once-off line, but the voice actor gave such a catchy delivery that after that we had him do it more and more. Actually, this character is still an incredibly important key to the plot. You get a little hint about that in the game.

--Nomura

Xaldin

He has the image of a medieval Chinese military commander. He is excellent at strategizing, and a powerful soldier. I'm sure the players all know that he is a contender for the first or second strongest in the Organisation. I'm satisfied that I was able to depict that strength in his personality, too. I personally really like this character.

--Nomura

Vexen

As a brains-only character, he has this undeniable loser feel to him. But, he does have a mad, scary side. He's fierce and out for himself enough that among the development staff we said Xemnas is to KHII what Vexen is to Re:COM. I like all the scenes where he loses it.

--Nomura

Lexaeus

He's a character with strength to rival Xaldin. While Xaldin has power plus technique, I'd say to Lexaeus is more of a samurai, or that he has bushido-style strength. If you listen to his very

last line in Re:COM, I think you'll be able to see his spirit. I wanted to do more with this character.
--Nomura

Zexion

As he shares something like a master-servant or teacher-student relationship with Xemnas, like Saix, he is a character with strong connections. While he was the superior in that regard, perhaps that was ultimately his downfall. It is likely that if Marluxia and Axel had not betrayed him in Castle Oblivion, he would have played a central role within the Organisation.
--Nomura

Saix

While he is Number 7, a balanced and comprehensive look shows proficiency-wise he is the Organisation's Number 2. We had already decided back when making COM that he would have a berserker trait, so we created him as a character that had a combined stillness and motion. I personally want to get a little deeper into this character. I like the scene where he and Axel face off.
--Nomura

Axel

I never thought he would grow as much as he has. We originally planned to have him exit upon being defeated by Roxas during the opening of KHII, but all the staff, myself included, were strongly inclined to have him keep playing an active role after that. It's possible he will have things to do in the future, too. I tried to put that into his 'see you' line in KH2 FM+.
--Nomura

Demyx

From the beginning he was created as a light-hearted character, but his voice actor really made him stand on his own as a character despite the short appearances he had. He is by no means strong, so I think it's funny how you don't see it coming when his abilities make him a formidable opponent. His line before exiting was something I thought of on the spot and had them add in.
--Nomura

Luxord

In all honesty he is my absolute favourite Organisation member. I like how he treats everything as a gamble, like Setzer from FFVI of old. I actually wanted to make him stand out more. At least I got him to say some things during the meeting scene added to KH2 FM+... but Luxord should have been able to do so much more...

--Nomura

Marluxia

During the plotting stage we intended him to be a woman, but we thought about the balance with Larxene and made him a man. When you consider how he was entrusted with Castle Oblivion despite being Number 11 of the Organisation, you can tell just what a cunning character he is. I wasn't able to show this to you, but I'm sure you can imagine how he played the perfect 'can-do man' in front of Xemnas. He's quite the actor.

--Nomura

Larxene

She ended up being the only female character in the Organisation, but in effect it made her more of an individual, which I think is good. I had a firm image of her voice, so hers was the very first voice actor we decided on. Adding that voice made her all the more brutal, didn't it? As for that hairstyle. I'm the one who drew it and it's still a mystery to me. ...Why did I give her that hair?

--Nomura

DiZ

In a way, his character is a bit of a red herring. We do reveal exactly who he is in this title, but we created the game with the thought in mind to draw the player's focus by depicting him as a complete villain while he is DiZ. I like the joke in the scene about the black coats added to Re:CoM.

--Nomura

Ansem

I feel that the things he says aren't simply the cheap lines that villains always spout, but that his words are, in a way, about the essence of things. When he says, "a meaningless effort. One who knows nothing can understand nothing," that is my favourite line from KHI. Correct! For me personally, there is a lot about Ansem that I can empathise with.
--Nomura

Ansem the Wise

Ansem is the boss of KHI, and Xemnas is the boss of KHII. As this character was a mentor to both of them, when casting his voice actor we were very careful to bring in someone who could give us a voice that paid dues to that fact. Of course one of the greats truly delivered. You can truly feel the majesty and dignity. Actually, I designed his face in the booth while listening to the voice being recorded.
--Nomura

Olympus Coliseum

In KHI we weren't really able to give Hercules facial expressions or anything, so I was glad that in KHII with the appearance of Megara and such we were able to depict his original character and his conflicts as a hero. Also, I was very satisfied that in KHII I was able to give the Hydra a big role, which I had wanted to do for a long time.
--Nomura

Neverland

I think I got the characters' cheeky personality across. The concept of Sora and the others flying was born because Neverland was in KHI. That is one thing that makes it a very special part of KHI. I think there are still things to do in that world. I want it to play an active part again in the future.
--Nomura

Agrabah

As there is a plotline that unfolds where you get to partner up with Genie, rather than focusing on how to depict Aladdin, my approach while writing focused on how to depict Genie through Aladdin. Aladdin and Genie's friendship is a connection that others cannot

enter, just like the friendship between Sora, Donald and Goofy, so if I was able to depict the jealousy and the heartwarming-ness I am happy.
--Nomura

Deep Jungle

The character of Tarzan, who communicated not with words but with his heart via emotions, made this world a perfect fit for KHI, but it hasn't appeared in CoM or since then. I'd like to touch on that character again, if there is a chance, though.
--Nomura

The Land Of Dragons

The truth is, I wasn't sure I could represent Mulan's world properly, and I wavered right until the end over whether to include it. However, when I saw the pictures of the finished product, I was very glad that I did have it appear. I think perhaps the avalanche scene and the like, which are setting-related viewpoints we aren't able to show in other worlds, may leave an impression.
--Nomura

Port Royal

Jack, as those who have seen the movie will know, is a character with unique actions, like his smooth hand gestures. When it comes to live action works such as this, we can't deviate from the category of ways real humans move, so the difficulties are different from those of cel animated works. Despite that, I think we did well with scenes such as the one where Jack flips the medallion to test it.
--Nomura

Beast’s Castle

Primarily, Disney characters can't go to other worlds, but in KHI Beast violates that ban. In a way, I wrote him with the image of a man that is ahead of Sora. In KHII we made his world, Beast's Castle, a setting, and got to tell his original story.
--Nomura

Space Paranoids

The character we depicted in KHII as 'Tron' is completely different from the original movie. Also, I thought the finished product, a new world inside a computer that was deeply related to the main plot of KHII, was very interesting. I hope you were able to see the last parting scene in the little window during the credits.
--Nomura

Translation note: re-watching the KHII credits not advised. Translator may or may not be currently crying due to surprise Auron-related emotions.

Goldpanner. (2014, August 3). *Character's Report Vol. 2 Translations*. KHInsider. https://www.khinsider.com/forums/index.php?threads/characters-report-vol-2-translations.197305/. [Archived: https://wayback-api.archive.org/web/20250715215442/https://www.khinsider.com/forums/index.php?threads/characters-report-vol-2-translations.197305/].

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Kingdom Hearts 358/2 Days Ultimania

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Timeline

Day	Roxas	Sora
1	Sora's nobody, who is born in Twilight Town, is given a name and joins the Organization	Namine is born in Castle Oblivion, and Organization 13 appears Sora is revived from becoming a Heartless
6	Xemnas tells Roxas at the shore of the ocean of darkness that he has been to see him = Sora	Sora fights a mysterious man (Xemnas) at Hollow Bastion
7	Xion joins the Organization as #14	
16	The plan to use Sora in Castle Oblivion is established Around this time Sora fights the seeker of darkness, Ansem, and saves the world, and Riku and the King are left in the world of Darkness	
22	Marluxia and Co. head to Castle Oblivion	
23	Axel and Vexen and others head to Castle Oblivion	
24		Sora arrives at Castle Oblivion
25	Roxas sees Xion's face for the first time Xion can use the keyblade	Riku arrives at Castle Oblivion around this time

26	Roxas falls into a deep sleep	The changing of Sora's memories continues
49	Roxas has a dream of seeing Sora getting into the pod	Sora fights Marluxia, and goes to sleep in the pod
50	Roxas wakes up	
51	News arrives that all the members at Castle Oblivion have been obliterated	
52		Riku and the King, and Diz and Namine disappear before Axel's eyes, who remained at Castle Oblivion
71	Axel returns from Castle Oblivion	
74	Xion, who has lost the ability to use the keyblade, is found by Roxas and Axel in Twilight Town	
95		Diz and Namine move to Twilight Town around this time
96	Xion can use the keyblade again	
149	Xion battles Riku and is defeated	Riku fights Xion and wins. He is surprised when he sees her face.
171	Xion is defeated by a heartless and falls into a deep sleep	
193	Xion, who has been getting Sora's memories while she slept, wakes up and resumes missions	

224		Namine finds out that the reason she's having trouble restoring Sora's memories is "Because Sora's nobody is beginning to connect with 'her'"
225	Xion access the Organization's main computer	
255	Xion, who had snuck into Castle Oblivion, encounters Axel who is on a mission. After that, she learns what she is and escapes the Organization	Around this time Riku is told by Namine that Sora can't wake up unless Sora's nobody and 'her' are gone
276	At Destiny Islands, Xion is overwhelmed by memories and faints. She is saved by Riku and he tells her of his current condition	Riku saves Xion, and explains about Sora. From then on he works with Xion for a little while
297	Roxas and Axel head to Castle Oblivion to investigate the Organization imposter. Roxas collapses Roxas and Axel, who have moved to Twilight Town, witness Xion and the imposter together	Riku and Xion appear together before Roxas and Co. in Twilight Town
298	Saix orders Axel to retrieve Xion Axel and Roxas find Xion in Twilight Town. Axel takes Xion back with him	
300		The restoration of Sora's memories just about comes to a halt
321	Roxas' power is being absorbed by Xion and he is in bad shape	

352	Saix plans to make Xion and Roxas kill each other off, but fails at the interference of Axel	The restoration of Sora's memories comes to a complete halt. Diz urges Riku to force action
353	Xion fights Xigbar and escapes. Axel misses this	Riku reunites with Xion. Riku makes Xion, who has made her decision, go to Namine and tells of their parting
354	All the Organization members are told of Xion's true self and the replica plans	Riku reunites with the King. He tells him that he must fight in order to restore Sora's memories, and asks the King to take care of Sora before he leaves
355	Roxas leaves the Organization	
356	Axel retrieves Xion	Namine meets Xion, and explains that there's something she must do
357	Xion fights Roxas, and is defeated as planned. She asks him to free 'Kingdom Hearts' and vanishes	
358	Obtaining dual keyblades Roxas battles Riku. He is defeated by Riku who has let out his power of darkness and is taken to Diz and Co.	Riku battles Roxas. Even though just doing it once might cause him to fall, he lets out his power of darkness and finally is victorious
359	Roxas begins his imaginary summer vacation in a virtual Twilight Town	
364	There is one day left of Roxas' summer vacation before 'it's over'	
365		Sora awakens.

KHInsider. (n.d.). *KINGDOM HEARTS 358/2 Days Ultimania - Timeline*. KHInsider. https://www.khinsider.com/dark-seeker-saga/358-2-days/interviews/kingdom-hearts-358

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Nomura Interview

Translators: krexia and Lissar

Please do not repost translations without crediting KHInsider.

Interview Date: 27 May 2009

The KH world shows new breadth in the spin-off titles 358/2 Days, coded, and Birth by Sleep. We were able to talk to Director Tetsuya Nomura about his thoughts on the new 358/2 Days as well as the development of the future of the series. (Interviewer: Akira Yamashita)

The time period for the scenario was decided after the multiplayer idea was solidified

-- So, the new Days is one of the three titles announced in the Autumn of 2007 as new projects in the KH series.

Nomura: Those three titles were all announced at the same time, but in reality the opportunities for the projects were raised in a disjointed way. Birth by Sleep is a project that was raised within our company, but Days is from Nintendo, and codedis from Disney, so we started by talking to each of them.

-- So out of those, was Days the first project put into motion?

Nomura: That's right. Actually, from just before the DS was released, there were voices saying it should definitely have KH. When we first heard of the DS' specifications, we thought it was a kind of hardware completely unheard of in previous ways of thinking. There had been no other game machines with two screens, and we were pretty worried about how they should be put to practical use. So we didn't get started straight away, rather we continued searching for the form of a KH that it would be meaningful to release on DS. Separately, we wanted to make a completely new game making full use of the DS' functionality, and began The World Ends with You. So we were able to work on the concept for KH while actually working with the DS.

-- When you decided to make KH for the DS, what was the first concept you thought of?

Nomura: It was the multiplayer. With The World Ends with You, there hadn't previously been a game concept like it, and we couldn't fit in the concept of playing with multiple people at the same time. So this time, we thought we wanted to expand on that. Then, looking at the hardware specs, we considered whether to go with 2D presentation like Chain of Memories or The World Ends with You, or whether to use a specialised system for the DS' capabilities. When the market changed to more serious games (for example, educational games), I felt as a game creator that I wanted to give people a more straight-forward "game"-like game. Also, from our experience with Chain of Memorieswe felt that what fans wanted from KH was this

kind of straight-out game, so first of all we had h.a.n.d. draw up a test version of a traditional, fundamental KH, and when we saw how good it was, our resolve to go with a straight KH game even on DS was solidified.

-- Where did the idea to use the Organization members for the multiplayer come from?

Nomura: We made a game where characters from various FF games got together to battle, Dissidia, but that was a project we were originally thinking of using for KH. However, deciding it would be a bad idea to make Disney characters fight each other, it never materialized for KH and ended up shifting to FF. Even this time we thought that it would be difficult to bring out Disney characters and have them fight each other in multiplayer, and wondering what to do, we arrived at the idea of using Organization XIII. These guys were still connected to Disney, but we thought it would be okay because they were original KH characters. Also, with all their attributes and weapons being different, it would be easy to show their individuality, so made a scenario where you could play as Organization XIII in multiplayer. After deciding that, when we were thinking about which time period we should place the scenario in, we thought if we cut out the one year that Roxas was in the Organization it would link well with the multiplayer idea.

-- I see, so from the multiplayer you expanded on the concept of the storyline and time period.

Nomura: That's right. Only, in the end Donald and Goofy, who are original Disney characters, ended up in multiplayer too (laughs). When we went to confirm with Disney that it was alright to include those guys, we were unexpectedly told it was OK. I guess it's okay so long as it's not a one-on-one battle.

Xion's strong similarity to Kairi was due to a desire to mislead

-- How did you come up with Xion, who became such a key person in the storyline?

Nomura: We showed how Roxas left Organization XIII in KH2. At the same time as we were polishing off the KH2 project, we had assumed to a certain extent what Roxas' movements were during the time period when Days happens, and thought that "Roxas definitely left the Organization because of the influence of someone close to him." And, we thought that "someone" should be a girl his own age. Flowing from that, we began to construct the storyline, beginning with Xion's existence.

-- Who was it that gave Xion her name?

Nomura: That was Kanemaki-san (Tomoko Kanemaki, scenario writer). I admired the many meanings included in it, and decided on it straight away. KH scenarios are always written by

many scenario writers, but I was troubled about who to ask this time. Since this would be a continuation of the series so far, I couldn't ask someone without an understanding of the subject matter of KH. Kanemaki-san had previously written novels for the KH series, and I thought it would be good to work with her on the actual games, so this time I asked her.

-- The creation of a "14th Member" caused quite a stir.

Nomura: When we first made the announcement, we had thought it would cause a stir. We were often told that "It's strange to have a 14th member in Organization XIII," and Saix talks about that in the game itself.

-- How did you go about designing Xion's outward appearance?

Nomura: It was decided from the start that she would have a deep connection to Kairi, so she was based on Kairi with her hair changed a little. We were actually thinking of changing nothing but the colour of her hair, but when designs were drawn up her hairstyle was made quite a bit different too. Even the 3D polygon model's face is the same as Kairi's, apart from the hair. So, if you look at the 3D models of Xion, Namine and Kairi, they have the same face and differ only in their hair, but unexpectedly have individual personalities.

-- Also, Xion's voice actor is Risa Uchida, the same as Kairi, and bits of Kairi's theme tune are included in Xion's theme tune; elements that showed there was a connection between the two.

Nomura: Truthfully she's not unconnected to Kairi, but if if I had to explain, we were thinking of trying to mislead people with things like, "Is Xion Kairi's Nobody?" This probably wouldn't work for people who'd played KH2, but on the other hand we also aimed to confuse them; "If she isn't a Nobody, what *is*Xion?" That was why we made her similarity to Kairi so strong.

-- Was her true nature decided from the start?

Nomura: Yeah. At the start of development, I worked on the scenario with Kanemaki-san, Watanabe (Daisuke Watanabe, scenario supervisor) and Ishida (Yukari Ishida, planning director), and it was decided then. This is related to the misdirection from before - people who know the KH series would think that the Organization members are all Nobodies. But it would be boring if she was really a Nobody, so we thought about what we could do for her true nature.

-- Xion's hood appears or disappears depending on who's looking at her. That was new.

Nomura: That was something we definitely wanted to do. We wanted people to go, "Huh?" when Xion's hood appears and disappears in each cut. After finishing the scenario writing, I

thought about it and asked Ishida to somehow prepare people for it happening in the event scenes. I tend to think the program failed to make the reason clear, though. There were a lot of misunderstandings like that in the production of Days. The noise that was put over the reflections of Sora that appear on the bottom screen was something we'd been thinking about since the early stages of writing, but during debugging we were often asked, "Is this a bug?" (laughs).

The last scene was planned right from the start to connect to KH2

-- In this game, did you write much of the scenario yourself?

Nomura: I arranged the main parts of the scenario, and referencing the plot that Kanemaki-san had put together, I wrote everything from start to finish. For two weeks I didn't see anyone, lived on canned food, and wrote the whole time. After I finished writing I had Kanemaki-san go over the dialogue, had Ishida adjust and correct the fine details, then made the final revisions myself.

-- Is it unusual for you to write even the dialogue yourself?

Nomura: This was the first time I'd done it. In previous titles, I'd write the foundations of the plot, but apart from points where I wanted characters to say particular things along the way, I didn't put in the dialogue. So rather than what we call the scenario, it was really just the plot, but this time I thought, "Why don't I try to write this myself." And as you might expect, it was tiresome. When I finished writing, I said "I never want to do this again." (laughs)

-- What, to you, were the most significant lines in Days?

Nomura: Roxas' very last words, I guess. All the other dialogue was written to arrive at that point. We were thinking of that last scene, with Roxas running, right from the start. KH2 begins from the scene just before this game's last scene where Roxas runs off, so we thought we wanted to connect to that really well. Days has a feeling of being well connected to this important point.

-- Several lines from previous titles appear in the dialogue of Days.

Nomura: Yeah. I like using that kind of device, so we'd think "Ah, this is from that time," and put things into the game. For example, if you compare bits of the start of KH2 to Days, there's the same dialogue, and talk of the friends' promise to go to the beach. This was done for the imaginations of people who know that the beginning of KH2 is a world made from Roxas' memories. While making this game we were conscious of having people who haven't

tried the rest of the series play, but we put in elements to expand the imaginations of people who have been playing the series the whole way through.

-- Was that also why sea-salt ice-cream was given such a featured role?

Nomura: It's unusual in an RPG, but this time we were depicting daily life, and not every day is all that dramatic. This is a story about how those days pass by and pile up. Therefore, we weren't trying to depict adventures with lots of changes like we have in the series so far, rather the repetition of days, <color=red>with each one ending in conversations on top of the clock tower. But there's nothing to pin down a situation where they just gather there and talk about nothing,so we thought we'd have them eat ice-cream.

Even when plot inspiration strikes, it's reconsidered and made unpredictable

-- Why does the story mode begin with the conversation scene from day 255?

Nomura: There are two reasons for that, and the first is that we wanted to start the story with a conversation. Roxas doesn't talk much at the beginning of the story, so we brought in this scene referring to another day at the beginning of the game. The other reason was, in showing a scene with a fun conversation but where someone waited for doesn't show up, we wanted to put the players in suspense, wondering what this was about. For people who know the series, they'd know before playing that Days is a game keeping all sorts of secrets, but people playing for the first time with this game would have no knowledge at all. We wanted those people to start the game with questions, too.

-- In the games you've worked on, Nomura-san, there are a lot of riddles like that, implanted throughout the scenarios.

Nomura: I'm aware of that. When I'm writing the plot, as soon as I get an idea for the next scene, I try and make it go in a completely different direction. Even if I think, "It'd be great to have that person's true nature be this," it's boring if it's what people expect, so I start thinking carefully about who else they could be. I want to create some sort of surprise, I want there to always be something left to wonder about, that's what I think about when writing the plot.

-- In the KH series, there are a lot of "mysteries" that continue from other games in the series that keep the players interested.

Nomura: Yes, but it's a double-edged sword. The games probably seem difficult for people who haven't played other games in the series to get into, so we're trying to make them so that they won't be that way. For example, in this game we had the main character Roxas start out with having no memories, so people for whom this the first KH game they have played, they can learn about the world along with Roxas. We always worry about how to "reset" from the

previous game. For example, even though you got Sora to level 100 in KH, why is it that he starts at level 1 in KH2? Of course it's a game, it has to start out like that. So, we used Chain of Memories' story to have them lose all of their abilities and then start anew.

-- Did you have anything to do with the individual World stories?

Nomura: I told Kanemaki and Ishida that I didn't want Roxas to just go, finish his mission, and leave. I wanted him to learn something, to leave with something to think about. But after that I left it up to them. Though I didn't do any of the writing on this part myself, I did check the story, and when they were writing it for the Scenario I told them what revisions they should make. In the game the Organization tries to not do anything to bring attention to themselves. So our story became them hiding while other characters talk, and occasionally talking to a few other characters, and what they took from those conversations.

-- There are quite a few things in the game that have a connection to KHII, like what happened at Beast's Castle. Was this your decision?

Nomura: No, that had already been decided from the beginning that there would be a lot of connections to KH2. Actually, having Pete was quite helpful. We were in a bit of a fix since this time we didn't have Donald and Goofy, there weren't really any Disney characters that we could see on multiple worlds. Fortunately we had used Pete in KH2, so we could just use him. (laugh)

We want you to imagine all the various meanings of "358/2 Days"

-- Where did you come up with the idea of having one mission per day in the Story Mode?

Nomura: Because this is on a handheld system we wanted to have something you could play quickly. So we made it so that you could play it in short spurts over a long period of time. If we had made each play session too long your eyes and hands would start to get tired.

-- Single missions are fairly short, but there is quite a number of them.

Nomura: At first we were going to have a mission for each of the 358 days. But we thought that would be too much, so we were going to make it around 150, but when writing the scenario we realized even that would be too much, so I gradually got rid of more and more missions. Then the guys on Planning got rid of even more, and then even after that when we sat down to play the finished product we still felt it was too much. I wonder what would have happened if we had made it as originally planned. (laughs)

-- I heard the Panel System was your idea. I thought it was a ground-breaking new way of using the ablities you've gained on your characters in multi-player.

Nomura: We didn't want you to have to train each character from the ground up. Also, since you can't allow two of the same Disney character or Organization member to exist at the same time, two people can't use the same character during multi-player. So if two people had only trained the same character, multi-player would lose a lot of it's fun. So instead of training individual characters we made a system where you could take all the abilities that you've learned and move them to any other character.

-- By the way, I heard that it was your decision to name Luxord's weapon, "*Kyuukyoku Mousou* 13"...?

Nomura: Well, the Planning staff always send us many different ideas for names, and this time they sent us something like "*Kyuukyoku Mousou*" or "XIII *Mousou*", so we just put those together. Since the weapon was just for fun, we figured why not? But then the localize team said, "If we do a literal translation it will become "Final Fantasy XIII". Is that okay?" I seem to remember saying that might be a bad idea. (laugh)

-- Just one more thing that I think everyone is wondering, just what does the title "*358/2 Days*" mean?

Nomura: That's the question that everyone has to ask in interviews. (laughs) There is an answer, but I think it's best not to answer it. Well okay, I'll give a little hint. "/2" is read in English as "over two", but this isn't the kind of over that means to "pass over" something. The 358 days are shared between two people, so "/2", but I'd rather you imagine which two we are talking about. After you've finished playing it you might change your mind about who the two people are.

-- 358 Days is one week short of a complete year, of course...

Nomura: Yes, of course for people who played KH2 they know that the game is like a countdown to the final day. And of course they know the realize why it's missing that one week. So they already know the reason for the title is that it is "a week short of a year, split between two people." But is that really the true answer? I named this game hoping that people would think on it even after they've finished playing it.

The outlook for coded, BbS and afterwards KH3

-- I'd also like to talk the other two games that were announced at the same time as Days. First I want to ask you about coded, which just started serialization on mobile phones.

Nomura: Yes. In coded, the structure of the game is a bit different than usual. Mickey and everyone are looking at the data worlds on the computer screen, and the player is controlling

Sora in that world. So the story unfolds in both the real world and the data world. But, each episode always starts with Mickey, unfolds in the data world, and then ends with Mickey. Since you get it in episodes, I think it's very similar to the enjoyment you get from watching TV serial dramas.

-- It sounds like quite a lot...

Nomura: Well the first episode is mostly a tutorial, but world in the second episode will have something more concrete. We plan on having it start June 2009, then every month add a new world, and continue it throughout this year.

-- And how about BbS?

Nomura: Birth by Sleep will be a very important game that collects everything about the series into one story. With the three main characters, the story is as big as one of the numbered Final Fantasies. We put in a lot of connections to it in Days, and I think that a lot of questions and unknowns from the previous game will be answered in Birth by Sleep. Also, there will be quite a few original characters from previous making an appearance.

-- So the mysteries from previous games will be answered in BbS?

Nomura: Well quite a few will be, but there will also be enough to leave you wondering what will happen next. This game is set the farthest in the past of any other, so it connect to KHI, but the main characters are three that haven't appeared in the other games. So how their story will end, which will of course be shown in the game, will leave you wondering even more after the game has finished.

-- So is it possible that there will be another game connecting BbS and KH1? And might that be KH3...?

Nomura: Who knows? I already have ideas for the next installment. But since Birth by Sleep isn't even out yet, I don't have to think about it until awhile from now. Recently everyone kepts asking me when I'm planning on coming out with KH3. Even though I'm currently busy with Final Fantasy versus XIII, I'm also thinking that it's almost time to start thinking about it seriously. Though it's entirely possible that the next game in the series won't be KH3.

-- So what will it be?

Nomura: I can't say that quite yet, but it will be more "offical" than a side story. I actually told the producer this recently, and he said "...what?" It's the mystery KH. (laugh) Of course, I am also thinking about KH3.

-- Well, I'm looking forward to seeing what will happen next in the series, of course we have to wait until these three games are released.

Nomura: Yes. With these three games we decided to show a new KH, with one of the answers to this being Days. That's why it has a different feeling from the previous games, and we're a little anxious to hear about how the fans reaction is going to be. This is the first time we've had a multiplayer mode, so I hope everyone will try it out and tell us what they think. Also, there will be a lot of people for whom this will be their first KH game, friends who invite them to play on multiplayer, or they became interested because it came out on the DS. So for those people I would like to say, please try out some of the other games in the series. And of course, for those people who have been with us since the previous games, I hope you will continue to support us. It's because of you we've managed to bring the KH series this far. I hope we can continue to live up to your expectations.

Secret of this game only he knows:

Koki Uchiyama, who voices Roxas, seemed really upset on the last day of recording, saying "Now I won't be able to play Roxas anymore." Even though I'm having him play the part of another character in the next game.

krexia. (2009, June 25). *358/2 Days Ultimania - Main Nomura Interview*. KHInsider. https://www.khinsider.com/news/Ultimania-Interview-886. [Archived: https://web.archive.org/web/20250717125851/https://www.khinsider.com/news/Ultimania-Interview-886].

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Scenario Interview

Translators: krexia and Lissar

Please do not repost translations without crediting KHInsider.

At the same time as giving us the answers to riddles previously talked about, 358/2 Days raised countless points of foreshadowing about Birth by Sleep. Looking at the scenario itself, and the whole "plan", we asked Mr. Nomura about the more difficult parts of the story. (Interviewer: Yuuko Oono)

-- The "Replica Plan" that was the key to this game, was it begun with Roxas' entry into the Organisation?

Nomura: No, earlier than that. Originally Vexen was working privately to advance the research on Replicas, but for the Organisation's goal of completing "Kingdom Hearts of people's hearts" they needed to use the Keyblade to recover hearts, so they switched to this plan of copying the Keyblade hero. As for who was or wasn't told about the "Replica Plan", that depended only on their different missions.

-- Xigbar wasn't told about it, but he seems to have found out on his own.

Nomura: Even in Final Mix+, Xigbar was probing Zexion about the "Room of Awakening" - he was investigating various things on his own. He will be talked about again in Birth by Sleep.

-- Xion looked like "him" in Xigbar's eyes (see here), so why did he also treat her as a girl?

Nomura: First of all, Xigbar didn't always see Xion as "him", it's more like he appeared just at that moment. He always sees Roxas treating her as a girl, so he just goes along with that. There's no need to give Roxas doubts, and the way he called her "Puu-chan (Doll)" from the start was just joking around, typical for a guy like him.

-- Roxas and Xion collapse several times in the story, is this because of Sora's influence?

Nomura: Roxas has been existing closely with Sora from the start, and directly feels the influence of Sora's present conditions. Afterwards that tendency appears in Xion too. The two of them are sharing Sora's power, so if on the one hand one of them gains a lot of power, the other's body weakens and they collapse. It's a relationship that is only practical if kept perfectly in balance. (See box below.)

Roxas and Xion's incidents

Day 26: Roxas faints

-- In order for the changes in Sora's memories to progress.

Day 74: Xion becomes unable to use the Keyblade

-- As a counterbalance to the power absorbed when Roxas awakens.

Day 193: Xion, having been defeated by Heartless and gone to sleep, wakes up, then during a mission collapses, but soon gets up again.

-- While she was asleep Sora's memories continued to flow into Roxas. Due to the memories being reconnected.

Day 297: Roxas faints

-- A result of going to Castle Oblivion, where Sora is sleeping, and getting too close to his "true form".

-- Why does Xion become able to use the Keyblade again on day 96?

Nomura: This was less due to her doing missions together with Roxas every day, and more due to using his Keyblade. She was able to once again copy his power. At this moment, the two of them were perfectly in balance.

-- Xion is in a similar position to the Riku Replica of Chain of Memories, but unlike him, she is unaware that she was artificially created, and the path she finally chooses is completely different.

Nomura: The Riku Replica was modelled on Riku. With Xion, she becomes like the Kairi of Sora's memories. But rather than saying she was initially created to imitate something, it's more like she was a special case, born primarily to absorb Roxas' powers and evolve. It was intended right from the beginning of development that Xion and Roxas would eventually fight, but we had wondered about how to depict the conflict with Xion that would lead to this. At first I came up with the plot that would go like that of the Riku Replica, where Xion would insist that she was the real person and fight with Roxas. But many of the staff were of the opinion that Xion should stay as a nice girl, so when we were changing the scenario I rewrote it into its current form.

-- On day 356, after Axel brought Xion back, Xemnas took her away. Did something happen to her that caused her to attack Roxas the next day?

Nomura: No, because of what she had learned, she already knew what Xemnas expected of her. But because she had no choice but to go along with his plans, she knew she had no

choice but to be defeated by Roxas. The reason why Xemnas took her away was so that he could give her a more powerful "body".

-- On day 322 Saix says, "In a few days the three machines will be in operation." Was he talking about the machines that appear in the fight with Xion?

Nomura: Yes. They used them to absorb the memories from the places Sora had visited. These memories were sent to the "body" that Xemnas gave Xion, and amplified her power.

-- The last thing that Xion asked Roxas was to "Set free Kingdom Hearts." Was this due to Sora and Kairi's memories?

Nomura: Yes. At Xion's core are Sora's memories. And so what he felt, that the world's order should be maintained, she also felt. But Sora doesn't know anything about the Organization's plans yet, so strictly speaking this is not exactly Sora's feelings. The hearts freed from Heartless must return to where they came from, but if they are captured by the Organization they will not return to the body they are supposed to, so it is the same as if the Heartless took them. And that is what we saw in Kingdom Hearts II. Xion knew this, but she didn't have time to explain it to Roxas.

-- When Roxas tries to do what Xion has asked of him, Riku hears Xion's voice asking him to stop Roxas. Why?

Nomura: First he have to look at things in order. First, the reason why Roxas throws a keyblade to Riku, and we then see a vision of Xion, is that there is a small remaining part of Xion in Roxas that wants to stop him, and makes him take those actions. The name of the keyblade that is given to Riku suggests that it has something to do with Xion. Xion wants Roxas to set Kingdom Hearts free, but doesn't want him to face Xemnas right now. She sees that he would most likely lose. So she begs Riku to stop him.

-- She also had asked Axel to protect Roxas. What was her aim in doing that?

Nomura: Even though in the end both of their fates was to return Sora's memories and disappear forever, on day 356 she said to Namine "I think things will soon be difficult for Roxas." Until that time came, she wanted Axel to protect him from Xemnas.

-- Namine tells Riku that in order for Sora's memories to be restored, both Sora's Nobody and Xion must no longer exist. So he takes it on himself to defeat them, but when he and Roxas fought, was that the first time he had realized that Roxas was that Nobody?

Nomura: Riku only realizes it when Roxas takes off his hood and he can see his face, and he responds to his call. Until then he only half believed. When he first met Xion, he didn't think

that she was Sora or Kairi's Nobody, and it was the same with Roxas. When he first saw Roxas, he had no proof of who he was. So that's why he lost to Roxas, he was surprised at him using a real keyblade rather than an imitation like Xion's, and he called out to him. Part of Riku didn't really want to believe that his best friend really had a Nobody.

-- So at the start of the Replica Project they didn't have plans to get rid of Roxas?

Nomura: That's right. Originally the plan was to keep their power in balance. If it had been maintained, there would have been no need to get rid of one of them. But in the end Xion began absorbing too much power, and so they no longer needed Roxas. Xemnas had nothing to do with the plan, however, and only the people below him were concerned with it. Xemnas only cared that Kingdom Hearts be completed. Originally the Castle Oblivion plan was to use both Roxas and Sora, but since that changed it would be equally convenient to wait until Sora woke up in Kingdom Hearts II and use him then.

-- In the end Roxas is able use two keyblades. Is this because he now has Xion's?

Nomura: Well, it isn't that Roxas has physically inherited Xion's keyblade, but more that Xion has awakened it within Roxas. In the *KH* series there are a lot of complex reasons why someone can use a keyblade, but basically you need a "heart" to be able to wield one. So strictly speaking, they are being influenced by Sora. At the present I can't say more than that, since it would go into whether or not Roxas has a heart. And there is also a part that has to do with Xehanort's memories. This time there were connections to the Kingdom Hearts I secret movie, and the time will come when this will have a clear connection as well. You'll just have to ask me then.

Source: *358/2 Days Ultimania*

krexia. (2009, June 25). *358/2 Scenario Interview*. KHInsider. https://www.khinsider.com/news/358-2-Days-Scenario-Interview-894. [Archived: https://web.archive.org/web/20250717130239/https://www.khinsider.com/news/358-2-Days-Scenario-Interview-894].

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Birth by Sleep Speculation

The connection between Roxas and Ventus

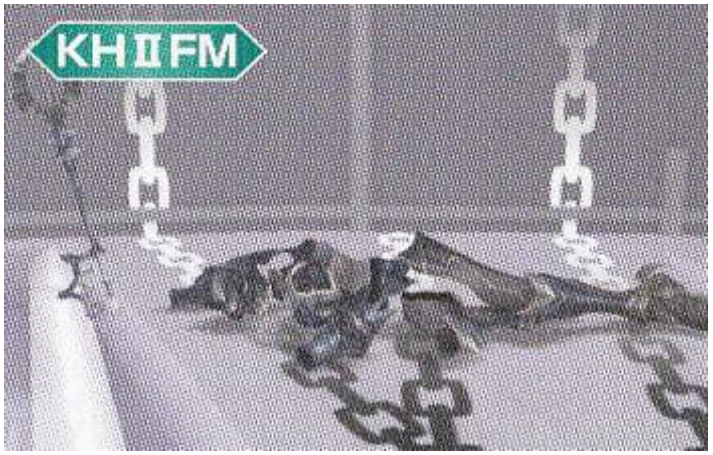
On Day 353, Xigbar looks at Xion, who's showing her face, and sees a main character from BbS, the boy Ventus who looks just like Roxas. Does the fact that Xion, who's drawing on Roxas' power, looks like Ventus mean there's some kind of deep connection between them?

Xigbar asks why "Ven" always glares at him.

Is the 'him' that always glares at Xigbar Ventus, rather than Roxas?

The "room" Xemnas is searching for

Xemnas is searching for The Room of Awakening which seems to be in Castle Oblivion, something that Saix and Xigbar know about too. What could be the secret of this room, where it is said that 'one more friend' is sleeping, as opposed to the Room of Sleep in KH2FM?



In KH2FM, Xemnas calls the armour in the Room of Sleep that resembles Aqua, "friend."

What about Xemnas' murmur, "So you're still sleeping" while looking over the unconscious Roxas on Day 27?

The principle behind being able to use the Keyblade

In this game, Roxas learns to dual wield on Day 358. Previously he'd been one of those able to use Keyblades. When you consider that he fought and defeated Xion, you may think that afterwards he was able to use Xion's too, but it seems there is another reason. Nomura has

said that "The ability to use the Keyblade will be made clear in BbS" - what could it be...?

Roxas, dual wielding at the end of the game. It seems in BbS we'll also understand how Kairi could use the Keyblade.

The names of the remaining five Organization members

This time, Axel's real name was revealed, but the names of Saix and numbers IX to XII remain a mystery. How will the names of these remaining five Organization members be revealed?

Apart from the six people who created the Organization, Roxas, Axel and Xion, real names remain unclear.

Axel and Saïx's "plan"?

That Axel and Saïx are old friends, and that Axel dealt with senior members of the Organization in order to move Saïx "up", were revealed in this game. So, just what was their plan?

The two oppose each other in KH2, but it seems like they were working towards the same plan in the past.

Roxas' "heart"

Roxas, who exhibits emotions like a human, is even asked by Axel if he actually has a heart. The other Organization members show many times through their behaviour that they have nothing but the appearance of emotions. Roxas is a Nobody, a "being without a heart", but do he and the other Organization members really not have hearts? Will hints about this be revealed in BbS too?

Roxas cries as he watches Xion disappear. Is it because he has a heart that he's able to cry...?

KHInsider. (n.d.). *KINGDOM HEARTS 358/2 Days Ultimania Birth by Sleep Speculation*. KHInsider. https://www.khinsider.com/dark-seeker-saga/358-2-days/interviews/kingdom-hearts-358-2-days-ultimania-birth-by-sleep-speculation. [Archived: https://web.archive.org/web/20250717131528/https://www.khinsider.com/dark-seeker-sa

ga/358-2-days/interviews/kingdom-hearts-358-2-days-ultimania-birth-by-sleep-speculation].

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Famitsu Interview with Tetsuya Nomura

Archive Author's Note: Non-interview content such as introductions, closing remarks, or unrelated images may have been omitted. This entry includes only the translated interview material.

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Translators: Heart Station

Nomura: "When the 14th member appeared, would the players be surprised?" The idea of 'Organization XIII' had already been imprinted. In 358/2 Days, Saix expresses in harsh words the reason why it isn't 'Organization XIV'. Even though it's cruel, it's an answer which has been prepared for.

–"358" is the number of days Roxas belonged to the Organization, but the meaning of "/2" is to divide by 2, so the "2" denotes two people.

Nomura: Who those two people are, I'll leave it to your imagination.

–Xion's appearance changes depending on the relationship of the person looking at her. It seems that when that relationship changes, she changes.

Nomura: The figure Roxas sees is the same as what the player sees, but for example, when Xigbar and Saix see her, her figure is different. At first some people thought it was unnatural she would be wearing a hood and then not in the same scene, but I think you come to understand it as you advance through the game. People connected with a certain person see Xion as 'Xion'. In the case of Xemnas, since he is connected to various people, he basically sees 'Xion', however sometimes he sees 'him'. Who 'he' is, I want you to confirm it on your own. Xigbar also sees 'him'.

–Will the relationship between Sora and 'him, Xemnas, and Xigbar be revealed in Birth by Sleep?

Nomura: Please look forward to it. In Birth by Sleep, the initial Organization members appear, but I can't say they play an active part. At that time, they were humans. Pay attention to Xigbar in particular. Although, when you think you understand his true nature… The mystery may deepen even more. (Laughs) He has a different standing than the other Organization members, there's speculation about his original form.

–Xigbar calls Xion 'Puu-chan', coming from the French word meaning doll (poupée).

Nomura: I requested to Mr. Ishida, "I want him to call her by a nickname that parodied 'doll'", and this is what we came up with. Xigbar is hinting at Xion's true nature from the beginning.

–At the time he met her, Riku was surprised to see Xion, even though he had a similar event happen to him in COM.

Nomura: At this time he noticed the true nature of her face, and knew what would happen, resulting in him telling her to leave the Organization.

–As for Xion loosing the ability to wield the Keyblade midway, it is because Roxas and Xion have a yo-yo effect.

Nomura: As Roxas gets stronger, Xion gets weaker. Roxas influences Sora, and Xion influences Roxas.

–The initial members of the Organization abandoned their hearts intentionally? Why, now, do they collect hearts?

Nomura: The reason is to have a 'complete existence.' KH1's Ansem (Xehanort, stealing this name) had a purpose, and realizing that he had transcended being a human, turned into a Heartless. Xemnas remembers that purpose, but as a Nobody, 'an empty shell,' collects hearts to become complete. The other members of the Organization have their own expectations, but are there mainly for the purpose of collecting hearts to complete Kingdom Hearts, as only Xemnas stared ahead and made it a priority. It is natural that Nobodies, who do not have hearts, demand hearts, though it may seem that Sora's defeating them is unnecessary, the Organization members don't look for their own hearts, but collect many from unspecified persons, and use them instead, placing the hearts in a situation where they cannot go back to their origin.

–Xemnas's goal will be further hinted at in Birth by Sleep, the 'Room of Awakening' that he is looking for is related.

Nomura: The person named 'Xehanort' appears in the trailer in various ways you might expect, but those will develop in ways that exceed all imagination.

Nomura: Axel goes to Castle Oblivion more than the other members by the orders of Xemnas to look for the Room of Awakening, he's not plotting alone.

Nomura: Since before the beginning of Castle Oblivion, the 'Room of Awakening' has its origin. The creation of these are told in Birth by Sleep.

Nomura: It is a fact that Saix and Axel probably wanted to take over the Organization, however they didn't understand what they were going to do or how to do it. As for Xemnas,

he knew about this betrayal, but never brought it up. Generally, one's conduct was for the sake of their purpose.

Nomura: It is a fact that Saix and Axel were acquaintances as humans, and that fact might be touch upon in Birth By Sleep.

QUESTIONS FROM THE FAMITSU READER CORNER

–This time there was no Secret Movie for 358/2 Days, because after the game, Kingdom Hearts 2 begins.

Nomura: Instead, there is an emphasis on the hidden characters and secret reports. As for the Secret Reports, the staff removes the names to make it more mysterious! There is only a hint to who wrote what, so use your imagination to figure it out! Here's a list of the number of reports each member wrote!

Xemnas: 4	Lexaeus: 1	Luxord: 2
Xigbar: 5	Saix: 9	Marluxia: 1
Xaldin: 1	Axel: 19	Larxene: 1
Vexen: 1	Demyx: 2	Xion: 12

–Originally, it is Sora that gives Roxas the power of light to use the Keyblade in fencing moves. But it is because of the influence of Xion that it's possible for him to use two at the same time.

Nomura: The Keyblade can be passed under certain conditions, but a clear thing cannot be said about that. The transfer of the Keyblade from Roxas to Riku at the skyscraper is related to Xion. Although it is the origin of the name "Xion," the flower Aster Tataricus (in Japanese, 紫苑 "shion") also means "forget-me-not" and "recollection." And Riku received that, "to pass away memories." When Riku gets the Keyblade, such meanings are contained in a flashback carried out by Xion.

– Although it's a subordinate of Roxas, the Samurai Nobody attacks in the end, because of the severing of the relationship with their master, Roxas.

Nomura: At the time, it was in development to have a subordinate Nobody in battles, but because of the difficulty involved in making such a thing happen, the goal did not materialize.

–To the bitter end, it is not Kingdom Heart's intention in itself to collect hearts

Nomura: There is no difference between a "pure blood" Heartless, and the ones with the emblems, only the process of their births. But a heart does not appear from the pure blood Heartless. This is touched upon in Kingdom Hearts 1, and may be elaborated on in the future.

–With Vexen's plan, and Roxas's joining, Vexen's plan took priority.

Nomura: Roxas being made from Sora and becoming a member wasn't an intention, but it was lucky for them!

—Is there a connection in 358/2 Days between Birth by Sleep and Coded?

Nomura: At the moment Coded does not have any connections with 358/2 Days, but Birth by Sleep is deeply linked. Birth by Sleep has connections to all the games in the series.

—As for Coded, Chapter 2 will be distributing.

Nomura: From Chapter 2, the story becomes progressively longer. The story of Chapter 1 had the nuance of a tutorial, but from Chapter 2 item synthesizing increases, and after a stage is cleared, other side quests become available. Since linkage with Avatar Kingdom also becomes full-scale, please look forward to it.

—How is the development status of Birth by Sleep?

Nomura: It's doing alright. You could say it's becoming a confident title. I've kept you waiting, but I think some new information will be sent out during summer. Since the plan is to present a trailer showing off the game's fighting spirit at Tokyo Game Show, look forward to it.

ASK THAT PERSON Vol.16-01

–What is the meaning of the 'x' in the Organization member's names? Also, was adding the 'x' to their original names difficult?

Nomura: it was Xemnas's decision to add the 'x'. I think the meaning will become clear in Birth by Sleep. Think of the circumstances of the Organization member's names with an 'x' added. We came up with many name candidates the with 'x' added in together with the staff, we rack our brains while we consider them.

–Will the real names of Organization XIII be released publically?

Nomura: Like how Axel's real name was revealed in 358/2 Days, I think they'll be revealed if there is an opportunity to do so.

–Out of the hidden characters, I want to use Sora!

Nomura: Since he's the main character of the series, he couldn't be left out. So he was put in

as a hidden feature.

–Does Xion have anything to do with Birth by Sleep?

Nomura: I think although many people want Xion to come back once more, I'm afraid to say that it's difficult.

–Who is your favorite character?

Nomura: It's Sora. Since he is involved with the first title I directed, I'll always feel a close connection to him. Since I wasn't such a good kid, I have the desire to entrust those things I didn't to Sora.

–Please tell us how you decide on the image of the character's clothing.

Nomura: I design them so their clothes don't become too fantastic. Using Sora's outfit as a base, the outfits of Kingdom Hearts are designed to suit it. The design for Roxas was made more refined than Sora. If Sora was a country child, Roxas would be the urban child. By the way, the checkers of Roxas's clothing represent light and darkness.

–What about a 358/2 Days Final Mix?

Nomura: There aren't plans for a release. One of the reasons is that the voices for the English version aren't out yet.

–Is there potential for a 358/2 Days remake?

Nomura: There are no plans at the moment. Chain of Memories was made in 2D, so it was remade, but since 358/2 Days is in 3D originally, the possibility is low.

–I want there to be manga and short stories about Organization XIII before they were Nobodies, like those of Roxas's time afterwards with Hayner and company.

Nomura: First of all, considering manga and short stories, since they're made when the author's requests, saying 'I want to write this', this isn't the place to ask for them. Therefore, there's a possibility if that opinion comes from the writer's side of it. However, it is dangerous because what is drawn upon in future games may end up conflicting with it. Because of that, if they decide not to do those parts of the game, then maybe it'll happen.

–Who are the strongest ranking Organization XIII?

Nomura: Xemnas is the strongest, and Roxas is considerably strong you include his potential. Xaldin and Lexaeus are higher after that. However, when their strength is configured by preference, it's different than how it appears in the story.

–About how old is Xemnas?

Nomura: Nobodies don't age; they exist as they were at the time of becoming a Nobody. He

seems about 30 years old?

–You should make a girl a main character of the series!

Nomura: One of the main characters in Birth by Sleep, Aqua will be. Please look forward to it!

–What is the definition of a heart in Kingdom Hearts?

Nomura: It is the theme of the series. To explain it simply, a person has a body, a soul, and a heart. As an image, the soul is the life source, without it a person would be dead. Since the heart doesn't have a form, memories play an important part in forming a heart. Also, the heart isn't limited to people, but to all things. I tried to explain this concept to Disney, and they merely said that it must be an Eastern way of thinking. It may be interesting how overseas players think of it.

Raz. (2009, July 3). *New Famitsu Interview with Tetsuya Nomura!* KHInsider. https://www.khinsider.com/news/New-Famitsu-Interview-with-Tetsuya-Nomura-908. [Archived: https://web.archive.org/web/20250717132422/https://www.khinsider.com/news/New-Famitsu-Interview-with-Tetsuya-Nomura-908].

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Nomura Interview

Archive Author's Note: Non-interview content such as introductions, closing remarks, or unrelated images may have been omitted. This entry includes only the translated interview material.
Although suggested by the article title, the "20 KH Mysteries Solved!" were not included in the original article and can be found here.

—

Translators: krexia and Lissar

"Who knows if the series will end with 'KHIII'..."

The original plot for "KH BbS" was written directly after finishing "KHII"

-- So how did you start development on "KH BbS"?

Nomura: Well I usually start by thinking about the gameplay, but for BbS I started by writing out the plot for the scenario. The scenes on Destiny Island with Terra and Riku speaking, and Aqua speaking to both Sora and Riku were ideas I had written down from the first. I wanted to make those scenes a reality so badly that I wrote out a development proposal. I had the plot in mind from way back at the end of development on KHII.

-- You had planned on having the climax scene of BbS be the secret movie of KHII FM+ from the start?

Nomura: Yes, but I hadn't yet decided when the scene would happen during BbS. When we were created the secret movie for KHII FM+ we didn't know how big of a game we would be able to put on the PSP, and we hadn't yet decided how long the scenario would be. We didn't know if we would put that scene at the end, or if we wouldn't be able to fit it in and not add it at all, or maybe if there was space would we be able to show what happened after it.

-- You used parts of the secret movie in the opening of the game, right?

Nomura: I talked with Nomatsu (Takeshi Nomatsu: Cinematic Movie Director) about the opening movie, and we decided that we wanted the movie to show what would happen during the story. For KHII we showed what had happened in the story so far, but we couldn't do that with BbS because nothing had happened before it.

-- How did you decided on the subtitle "Birth by Sleep".

Nomura: Honestly? I just wanted to use the word "by" in the title (laugh). Game subtitles

always have "of" or "is" in them, but I started to think about how "by" just wasn't used very much. The localization staff told me that it isn't used in titles very often, but our producer who is good at English said there was no problem with it, so I didn't think it would be that odd to use it. Also, I thought it would be interesting to use another "internet" word like in COM and Coded, and I wanted to make it be shortened as BBS (electronic bulletin board) which "connects" people. And I wanted to put the word "sleep" in the title as well, so it became "Birth by Sleep".

-- *So how was it decided that the Osaka team would be working on development?*

Nomura: When I had written out the development proposal the usual KH team had already been decided on to work on "FF Versus XIII" and so we started thinking about leaving it to another team. That's when the Osaka team came up to us and said "We'll be able to make a better game than any of the other teams, so please let us work on it." Then they made a test version for us with Sora, Donald and Goofy running smoothly, so we thought we'd leave it to them. At the time we had just started development on "Crisis Core", and the team was having some trouble working on the PSP. We showed them the work the Osaka team had done on the test version, and said "Look at how much you can do on the PSP."

-- *The gameplay this time specializes in Commands. Was this your idea?*

Nomura: Yes it was. The Deck Command was in the development plans from the first. We thought if we simplified the deck system that we used in COM we could make it a lot more exciting. We also took the Command charging system from "The World Ends With You" (Game made for the NDS in 2007) so that you'd have to wait after using a Command before using it again. We wanted to put these two systems together and evolve them even more. While the manual charging system from COM has a bit of freedom to it, with the automatic charging system we wanted to make you sweat. You thought it would be fun to have you run around trying to escape the enemy while waiting for Curaga to charge thinking "Hurry hurry hurry..."

-- *The "Command Board" was also another one of your ideas, wasn't it?*

Nomura: I've always loved board games. When I was little my father would make dice games for me, and I would copy him and make my own. Because of that I've always wanted to make a board game part of the gameplay system. In the FF series they have the Sphere Grid, which is a board game like system for growth. But I wanted to take it even further and make a dice game that could be played by itself, and that's how I thought up the "Command Board".

-- *You also added the Dimension Link system into the mix.*

Nomura: In both KH and KHII, Donald and Goofy fought alongside you. But with the PSP it would have been difficult to have lots of characters moving at once. So instead of having your friends alongside you, we decided that you could just borrow their power from distance, which created the Dimension Link.

-- *It's fun that you can even link to other players through wireless.*

Nomura: The Osaka team came up with the idea of linking through wireless. It was the last thing we decided on for the Dimension Link system. The theme of the story is "connections", so we felt it would be proper to allow you to "connect" to other players via Dimension Link. It was also the idea of the Osaka team to have Ventus Link to Vanitas. I really liked that they managed to incorporate part of the game system into the story line. I thought they did an excellent job.

The concept for the story was "There is no coincidence in fate".

-- *Did you think about the three main characters having different scenarios from the beginning of development?*

Nomura: Yes we did. When we were first writing out the plot, we had decided on using the three main characters in separate stories. We wrote their stories starting first with Terra, then Ventus and then Aqua. And in the story you can see that first Terra leaves, then Ventus follows him, and Aqua leaves last. The overall concept is, though it seems like a catch phrase, "There is no coincidence in fate". The reason why Riku was chosen to wield the keyblade, or why Kairi met Sora and Riku. These things that seemed like they were just coincidence were actually meant to be.

-- *Had you planned on there being a Last Episode after the first three scenarios were complete?*

Nomura: No, it wasn't in the original scenario that we wrote. The scene at the end where Aqua is walking through the dark realm was the original ending to Aqua's scenario. The scene after that with Sora and Riku talking on the beach wasn't there at all. But because that would mean all of their scenarios ended on a dark note, we included Last Episode and the scene with Sora and Riku talking.

-- *How did you decide on the names for Terra, Ventus and Aqua?*

Nomura: When we were deciding on the names for Sora, Riku and Kairi in the original KH, we wanted to have their names reflect three things that made up the world. But with these

three we wanted to make there names out of the larger ideas of earth, wind and water. But that doesn't necessarily mean that Aqua and Kairi correspond with one another.

-- *How did you think of Vanitas' name?*

Nomura: I wanted to give him a name that meant "empty", and so I looked for something that would be appropriate. When I was searching I found a word that meant "emptiness" in Latin, "Vanitas". It looked a lot like Ventus' name, and in Japanese it has the kanji for "sora" in it, so I thought it was perfect. Of course in Vanitas' case it doesn't mean "sora [sky]" but "kara [empty]" [These two words are written with the same kanji, but are said differently and have different meanings.]

-- *Master Eraqus' name is an anagram of "Square" right?*

Nomura: Yes, but I didn't really think very hard on that name. Actually I gave him that name while writing the original plot, but when I read through it later I couldn't remember what it was supposed to mean. I asked around, but no one knew. Finally the producer realized that it was supposed to be an anagram for Square and I thought "Oh yeah!" (laugh).

I wasn't sure who to make Ventus look like, but...

-- *Was it easy to decide on the design for the three main characters?*

Nomura: No, it was actually pretty difficult. Especially since all three of them would change into armor, when I began to work on their design I had decided that they would hit a round device to change into the armor. But how I could incorporate that device into their clothing was pretty difficult to decide. Also, since one of the secret keywords in the story is "X", I decided that I had to put that somewhere in the design of their clothes.

-- *How did you decide on the design for their faces?*

Nomura: Well Terra's look was already a decided thing, we just had to make him look a bit younger. I knew that Ventus should look either like Sora or Roxas, and I wasn't sure which one to go with, but I thought Vanitas looking like Sora would have a bigger impact so I had Ventus look like Roxas instead. And there is a reason that Vanitas looks like Sora. As Sora filled in Ventus' fractured heart, the fractured part (Vanitas) was effected by Sora and ended up with Sora's face. So if it had been Riku who had filled in Ventus' heart, Vanitas would have looked like Riku.

-- *And what about the lone woman of the group?*

Nomura: Since she has no base to work with, unlike Terra and Ventus, I drew her as an

entirely new character. Since I had made Terra with somewhat Japanese styled clothing, I had that in mind when I designed the belt around her hips and gave her belled sleeves.

-- *It seems Aqua is pretty popular.*

Nomura: I had no idea that was going to happen actually. When I was drawing her I kept worrying that since she has no connection to existing characters that no one would care about her. I made Xion from Days a "short-lived and pure girl", but I wanted Aqua to be a strong girl. But, instead of making her a "strong girl who can beat the guys" I wanted to make her "feminine and strong". I didn't know how people would take her, but I think it's all thanks to Megumi Toyoguchi. When she did the voice for Paine in FFX-2, it was lower than her normal voice. But this time she performed closer to normal voice. I think she was able to express the strength that I wanted Aqua to have.

-- *What was your reasoning for choosing Ryotaro Okiayu as Terra?*

Nomura: Chikao Otsuka, who plays Master Xehanort, has a dry sort of voice. The actor for Terra-Xehanort, Akio Otsuka, has a deep resonating sort of voice. We wanted something that would have elements of both in it, and ended up choosing him. Of course we chose Chikao Otsuka for Xehanort as he is the real father of Akio Otsuka.

-- *Of course the reason you chose Miyu Irino for Vanitas' voice is because they have the same face?*

Nomura: Of course. Except he doesn't sound anything like Sora, does he? Irino has kept saying from long before that he wanted to play an evil guy, so he got sort of carried away with it (laugh).

Why Zack is the only FF character

-- *How did you choose which worlds they would visit?*

Nomura: The first worlds we decided on were the three worlds that the princesses were on. The princesses themselves appeared in the first KH, but their worlds didn't, and I wanted to show them at some point. And it was perfect since we would also be able to show how Maleficent started going after the seven princesses. The other worlds were chosen by how fun they looked when we drew them out.

-- *There are a few worlds that we have seen before.*

Nomura: Olympus Coliseum has been in every game so far, but since this time we would be able to talk about their past we really wanted to have it in. In the original movie there are

scenes that show young Hercules growing up, and we really wanted to show that, so we had them go to Olympus Coliseum.

-- Zack appears at the Coliseum, but was there a reason why he is the only FF character this time around?

Nomura: We wanted to have Cid and the gang in Radiant Garden, but that would have made the story go too far off track. The main story of BbS is complicated enough as it is, so instead of making a lot of side roads, we concentrated on the main story. Which resulted in having no other FF character but Zack make an appearance. The reason we chose him was, as this is a story set in the past of the first game, we wanted to have a character from the past of an FF game. As Zack was a character from the past in FFVII, he fit the role just perfectly. There were other characters we wanted to show, but since they'll be appearing in a different game we didn't put them in this one. As it isn't a game we've announced yet, I can't tell you who it is (laugh).

-- There was a new enemy this time called the Unversed, how did you think them up?

Nomura: Since they couldn't be around during KH, we needed to have an enemy that could no longer exist during that time. So we connected them to Vanitas, so that when he disappeared they will have disappeared as well. Their design concept was "emotions", so we see them with smiling faces, angry faces, crying faces... they were designed with many different expressions. The Unversed mark is also meant to be a heart that expresses emotions.

-- Speaking of enemies, the hidden boss that is Vanitas' sentiment was quite strong.

Nomura: Everyone liked Lingering Sentiment, the hidden boss from KHII FM, so we wanted to make him equal to that. The thing fans wanted most in a hidden boss was "demonic strength". So if our debuggers could find a way to beat him, we tossed that idea, and that's how he became as strong as he is. While they were making it I went to Osaka and fought him myself. But I couldn't beat him (laugh). If I can beat him, he can't be that strong, so having him so strong that I can't beat him is ideal.

The secrets of the secret event

-- The KH series always has a secret movie at the end, but this time there was a secret event called "Blank Points". Does the name express the empty parts of the story?

Nomura: It does have that meaning, but usually I give the secret movie a title that reflects the meaning of the movie. For example, the KH secret movie was "Another side, Another story",

and that was about Roxas. An of course the KHII FM secret movie was "Birth by Sleep". But this time, "Blank Points" isn't necessarily the title. Even though the meaning fits.

-- In the secret event Xehanort says "The heart that resides within Terra's heart." Who's heart is it?

Nomura: I can't say just yet, but I've set it so that you'll know who it is. Listen to Xehanort's words closely, and read his reports carefully. I think you'll know who it is then.

-- Ansem the Wise says to Aqua "Everything is born from sleep." What does this mean?

Nomura: In that scene the ones who are calling for "Sora" are the ones who have already disappeared from the world. But in the world of KH there is no concept of death, that for example they are just sleeping within Sora's heart. If you can just wake them up, they'll be able to return to the world, they would be "born from sleep". That there would be a possibility of this, is what Ansem the Wise is saying. Even Aqua, who isn't in the realm of light, would be born from sleep.

-- In that case, do the characters we see in that scene have a chance of returning?

Nomura: Yes. The data that Ansem has hidden within Sora is the secret to that revival. When Ansem had become DiZ, and studied the heart and emotions, the results he found he hid within Sora. There are a lot of people who thought that Coded was about finding those results, but that's not true. The ending of Coded was about finding out that DiZ had done something to Sora, as Namine said, finding out about the data that Ansem hid. What that data is will be revealed in the next game.

Two more games aside from KHIII are in the works

-- So how do you feel about Days, Coded and BbS having all been released?

Nomura: It was hard work, but fun. I got to try a lot of different things, and found things I'd like to keep on using. I've learned about what sort of gameplay can be used with each system. For example, the PSP can have a game that plays similarly to the original KH games, so I was able to make them exciting to play. Or the DS has no analog stick, so we went more for customization. We also used cell phones, which are not really a game console. It was a challenge to see how much we could make it a KH game with only simple controls. Based on this experience I think I've gained a lot that I will be able to use in the future.

-- We hear that the international release of BbS is coming along, how will it differ from the domestic version?

Nomura: The scenario hasn't changed much, but we've put in extra things. We've added

Critical Mode, an extra difficult about Proud, a few extra scenes that I had wanted to put in but couldn't, and added a few more songs for "Rhythmic Ice". There are also more keyblade and enemy types as well. The battles are balanced better, and we've tweaked some of the things that bothered us.

-- Are you going to release the international version in Japan as you have with KH and KHII?

Nomura: Well, if I say "we don't plan on it yet", people will take that as "no", so I can't really say anything. Since the voice acting is done so well it wouldn't be so bad releasing a Final Mix... but people only got so excited about KHII FM+ because it was sold with Re:COM. We're not going to put that much into it a second time (laugh).

-- Now that BbS is finished, we can't help but think about the next game in the KH series...

Nomura: For now while FF Versus XIII is still being worked on, there isn't much I can do on KHIII, but we've already begun work on the next game in the series. There is one that we are hoping to be able to release within this year. Then the next year there is one more game we are planning on releasing. I think it will probably make the main character[s?] more complicated. Also, the end of "Blank Points" with Sora leaving on a new adventure connects to KHIII.

-- KHIII will be the continuation of the story we've seen up until now, right?

Nomura: Yes that's right. Though fans probably think that the series will end with KHIII, the KH series we are developing right now, including KHIII, is just the first part of a bigger series. The main character of the KH series is Sora, but right now the first part could be considered "The Xehanort Chronicles", since after all the enemy has always been Xehanort right from the first game.

-- I see, so KHIII will complete The Xehanort Chronicles?

Nomura: Yes, that's sort of how we're thinking. So even if Xehanort's story ends, Sora will still have other adventures to go on.

-- So it's not "Once Sora's story is finished, another hero's story will begin", the hero is always Sora.

Nomura: Yes. One of the concepts behind the KH series is that the main character Sora isn't special, he's just a normal boy. Yes he does have connections with Ventus' heart, among others, but he hasn't inherited anything from them. He's just a normal boy you could find anywhere. I wanted to make Sora a character that the player could take onto themselves and feel that you don't have to be special. But connect to many people and you will realize your

secret potential. With BbS I want to make fans excited to see Sora's return. The secret event is a symbol of that, so I hope everyone will get to see it and wait for Sora's next adventure.

Raz. (2010, March 25). *Full Nomura Interview + 20 KH Mysteries Solved!* KHInsider. https://www.khinsider.com/news/Full-Nomura-Interview-20-KH-Mysteries-Solved-1366. [Archived: https://web.archive.org/web/20250717135038/https://www.khinsider.com/news/Full-Nomura-Interview-20-KH-Mysteries-Solved-1366].

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Plot/Scenario Mysteries Interview

Archive Author's Note: The original article title is only called "Birth by Sleep" (see: link). In order to make it clear what this section is referring to it has been renamed to "Plot/Scenario Mysteries Interview." In the address it is also called "Plot" whereas in the original comment by u/ZeroSora it is referred to as "Scenario." In the sources, however, it will still be referred to as "Birth by Sleep" as APA 7 style uses the article title.

Also note that the original article uses different colors of the * symbol to refer to its footnotes. This has been substituted with numbered footnotes - as per conventions. The footnotes have been kept italicized.

—

Translator: krexia

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Source: *Birth by Sleep Ultimania*

In this title, where our eyes are apt to be drawn to points that elucidate the mysteries of the past, it is by no means easy to grasp the full details of the story. As usual, we've gone after Mr. Nomura with the questions from the game that have been simmering away. (Interviewer: Yuuko Oono)

-- Considering the conversation between Sora and Ventus in the ending of the Last Episode, is this saying that the "just-born heart" that Ventus connects with in the opening is Sora's?

Nomura: Yes. At first we supposed that it could be Sora before he was born, but because of opinions from overseas that "the heart doesn't exist until after birth", we discarded that portrayal.

-- Ventus awakens with Sora's help, but at first his eyes are blank, and when he first meets Terra and Aqua he falls asleep under their barrage of questions.

Nomura: At that time, although Ventus has awakened, his heart is not fully formed. The imagery is the same as the first week after Roxas entered the organisation in "KH Days", when he was spacing out.

-- This time we saw a "rite of succession"[6] - is that a required condition for becoming a Keyblade user?

Nomura: That's essentially correct. In terms of the rite itself, the successee just has to make the successor grasp their Keyblade - if this rite is performed by a Keyblade Master, and if

[6] *Refers to Terra's interaction with Riku on Destiny Islands.*

they have suitable power, the Keyblade will choose that person as a Keyblade user, and appear before them. Terra, Ventus, all have passed this rite. Sora is the only exception.

-- The Keyblade succession can only be performed by a Keyblade Master, but we see Terra performing this rite with Riku - does this mean we can consider Terra a Keyblade Master?

Nomura: No. Terra was not awarded that title by his Master Eraqus, so no matter how Master Xehanort flatters him he is not a Keyblade Master. But that's just a matter of whether or not he's achieved the official title. Even Eraqus recognised that Terra possessed suitable power to be a Master, which is why he was able to perform the rite for Riku.

-- In Aqua's chapter, on the Destiny Islands, was Aqua originally intending to perform the Keyblade rite for Sora or Riku?

Nomura: Yes. When Aqua met Sora and Riku, she was on the point of realising that she may end up having to fight Terra. At that point she was going to perform the rite of succession for Sora, but realised that Terra had already performed the rite for Riku. Not wanting sora and Riku to end up fighting like she and Terra in the future, she didn't perform the rite for Sora. This is the meaning behind her murmurs that "One must not get too close to a chosen one," and "I must not make them walk the same path." When she tells Sora he must save Riku if he ends up walking the wrong path, she's projecting her own thoughts onto Sora.

-- By the time of "KHI", have Sora, Riku and Kairi forgotten about Terra and Aqua?

Nomura: That's right. In "KHI" Kairi herself says that she's lost all her previous memories, that she "doesn't remember anything before coming to the Destiny Islands", and it would be pretty easy for Sora to forget. After all, I think for a child of 4 or 5 years old to remember a person they met only once and exchanged just a few words with would be quite unnatural. Only Riku, who was told by Terra "Don't tell anything of today to anyone," may simply be keeping quiet.

-- If Terra wasn't the one who stole Aurora's heart in his chapter, who actually did steal it?

Nomura: It was Master Xehanort and Maleficent. In "KHI" it was shown that beings of darkness like Maleficent and the Heartless are able to steal people's hearts. The theory is that Terra, who has light residing in his heart, is not a being of darkness and therefore didn't steal Aurora's heart.

-- Who is the hero "similar to Terra" that Zack aspires to be like?

Nomura: As in the original game, it's Sephiroth. In "KHI FM" and "KHII" Sephiroth was portrayed as a being of darkness, but at the time of "KH BbS" we don't know whether or not he was a being of darkness.

-- What's the meaning behind the several puzzling images in Terra's chapter where we cross over into his mind?

Nomura: Firstly, when he hears the name of the masked boy from Master Xehanort at the mysterious wasteland, and we see an image of Aqua and Ventus defeated, that's a hint of the future. On the Destiny Islands, when he makes Riku his successor, he has a special view of him and catches a glimpse of his future. However, this isn't to say that Terra has the ability to see the future - it was a directive nuance intended to portray the future connection between Terra and Riku.

-- Was Master Xehanort the one who delivered the final blow to Master Eraqus?

Nomura: Because it was necessary to avoid showing such a cruel scene, it's difficult to tell from the presentation, but that's right. Terra saw this happen right in front of his eyes, so when he realised at the Keyblade Graveyard that Master Xehanort intends to harm Ventus and Aqua, this drives him to anger, saying, "Not only my father Eraqus..."[7] As an aside, although he says "my father", and we see from Eraqus' words that he thinks of Terra like a son, Terra and Eraqus are not actually father and son. Also, in his final moments Eraqus falls towards Terra - an important meaning is hidden in this scene.

-- In a memory scene in Ventus' chapter, we see Master Xehanort send Neoshadow Heartless after Ventus. But the Heartless only appeared in the world of light at the time Ansem Report 1 from "KHI" was written - were Ansem the Wise's student Xehanort's experiments with darkness not his first?

Nomura: As Yen Sid says in "KHII", the Heartless cannot be separated from the darkness in people's hearts, and have been around for a long time. Beings of darkness can draw out the darkness in the heart, so Master Xehanort could summon the Neoshadows with his own hands. In the same way, when Xehanort and Ansem the Wise's students begin to perform the first experiments on the darkness of the heart, artificial Heartless were created in large numbers.

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[7] *The quote is unfinished in the Japanese text, but the way it's phrased makes it clear that he means something like, "So not only did you kill Eraqus, now you intend to do the same to my friends." Just thought I'd add a note in case it wasn't clear in English.*

-- In this title, the dark influence of the Heartless isn't breaking down the walls between worlds, so in this period before Gummi Ships, why are Donald and Goofy able to travel to the Mysterious Tower?

Nomura: You can think of it as being thanks to Yen Sid, and also because the Mysterious Tower is a loophole world in the first place, so it comes under slightly different rules than the ones that connect the other worlds. By the way, when Donald and Goofy visit the Mysterious Tower in "KHII", they say "Isn't this tower strange!" even though they know it from "KH BbS". This is because the floors are constructed differently to the previous time they visited, which is strange (laughs).

-- Are the Unversed of a similar nature to the Heartless?

Nomura: That's right. The Heartless are born from the darkness of the heart, and Unversed are born from negative emotions, so you can call them relatives (laughs). To make them fundamentally similar, we made the designs similar. However there's one difference in that the Heartless are seeking hearts, whereas the Unversed behave according to Vanitas' will, and emotionally. For example, the Flood portray feelings of irritation.

-- In "KHI" when Sora stabs the "Keyblade of people's hearts" into himself to release his heart and Kairi's, Sora's Heartless and Nobody were born. When Master Xehanort and Terra:Xehanort stab themselves with the Keyblade, were his and Terra's Nobodies not created?

Nomura: That is not yet clear. However I will say that the fixed sentiment that remained just after Master Xehanort stabbed himself with the Keyblade was not a Heartless.

-- When Vanitas calls Aqua a "spare", is he talking about raw materials for making a χ-blade?

Nomura: Yes. She was a "spare" prepared in case Ventus did not survive the fusion process with Vanitas. Aqua was recognised by Eraqus as a legitimate Keyblade Master who viewed light as absolute, and holds a strong heart of light. So if Ventus were to fail she could have been used as material for the χ-blade.

-- Comparing the Organisation members when they were human to when they were in the Organisation, apart from Xehanort, only Isa and Braig have differently-shaped ears and differently-coloured eyes - why is this?

Nomura: It's a question of whether or not they're deeply connected to Xehanort. In Braig's case, comparing the scene where he's injured in his battle with Terra and flares up at

Xehanort, his appearance afterwards changes, which hints that something happened with Xehanort in between.

-- Roxas, the "Sora + Ventus" Nobody, was able to use a Keyblade. In contrast Xemnas, the "Terra + Master Xehanort" Nobody, wasn't able to use a Keyblade. Why is this?

Nomura: I'd rather that point remain a mystery. It's possible that he intentionally wasn't using one.

-- In "KHI", the robed man, Ansem the Wise's apprentice Xehanort's Heartless (the body of Xehanort's Heartless before he inhabited Riku's body), appeared on the Destiny Islands. Is this because it was Master Xehanort's homeworld?

Nomura: That may be one reason, but if he somehow had some of Terra's memories, we can consider that it might be because he had laid eyes on Riku previously. In terms of the elements of Terra and Master Xehanort, I think the questions of how their power is related and divided, as well as who has whose memories and heart, will become a key to the story * after this one.

-- Is that to say that there's a possibility that within Xehanort's Heartless, the darkness that sleeps in Riku's heart, there might remain something of Terra...?

Nomura: That's also a riddle connected to the next story,[8] so everyone please use your imagination.

krexia. (2010, March 25). *Birth by Sleep.* KHInsider. https://www.khinsider.com/news/Birth-by-Sleep-Plot-Mysteries-Interview-1364. [Archived: https://web.archive.org/web/20250717135548/https://www.khinsider.com/news/Birth-by-Sleep-Plot-Mysteries-Interview-1364].

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[8] *Story or stories; this could be singular or plural.*

20 Mysteries Solved

Mysteries concerning Sora (Roxas), Riku and Kairi

Q1: Why do Roxas and Ventus look alike?

A: Because inside Sora, which is Roxas' body, is Ventus' heart.

As was shown in the opening to BbS and the ending to Last Episode, Sora and Ventus' heart are linked (P.646). And so Roxas, who is a part of Sora, was affected by that and looks just like Ventus.

[picture: Little Sora and Ventus' heart]

Ven: "Can I become one with your heart again?"

When he was born into the world, he linked with Ventus filling his fractured heart. Many years later, when Ventus was on the verge of disappearing after his fight with Vanitas, Sora took him into his own heart.

Q2: Why did Roxas faint in Castle Oblivion on Day 297?

A: Because he had gotten to close to both Sora and Ventus, his "real self".

Before Day 297 in Days Sora had been to Castle Oblivion, as well as the fact that Ventus is asleep somewhere in the Room of Awakening. Both Sora and Ventus can be called Roxas' "real selves", and when he felt their presence it made him faint.

[picture: Axel and Roxas]

When Roxas went to Castle Oblivion the memories of his "real selves" made him confused.

[picture: Ventus asleep]

Ventus asleep in a room in the castle.

Q3: Is it possible that Roxas has a heart?

A: It is thought that it could be Ventus' heart.

In KHII FM there were clues to him having a heart, and in Days we saw Roxas crying--proof that he could have a heart. As was said in Q1, he has taken a lot of himself from Ventus. But perhaps when Sora and Roxas were separated, Ventus' heart stayed in Roxas?

[picture: Roxas crying]
On Day 357, Roxas cries after losing his friend Xion.

[picture: Little Sora and Ventus' heart]
Sora links with Ventus to help heal him.

Q4: Why can Roxas dual-wield?
A: Because he can use both Sora's and Ventus' keyblades.

Sora can wield two keyblades at once because he has Ventus' as well as his own. As Roxas is a part of Sora, he also can use two. In Days Roxas awakened his ability to dual wield after fighting Xion. In KHII once Sora absorbs him, he can also dual-wield.

[picture: Roxas and Riku fighting]
Roxas awakens his ability to dual-wield with his will to not forget Xion who also wielded a keyblade.

Q5: Why was Riku chosen as the original wielder of the keyblade?
A: Because he was chosen by Terra to inherit.
To use a keyblade you must have been chosen to inherit as well as been chosen by the keyblade itself. In BbS you could see that Terra performed the ceremony with Riku, and that is why Riku was able to take the keyblade that Sora used.

[picture: Little Riku and Terra]
Terra looks at Riku as he performs the inheritance ceremony.

[picture: Little Riku looks at a door with a keyhole.]
Because he has been chosen to inherit, Riku can see the keyholes of the world.

Q6: Why did Kairi end up with Sora and Riku?
A: It has to do with Aqua's "magic".
Nine years before KH, Kairi was thrust into the outside world, and found herself on Sora and

Riku's world. Ansem Seeker of Darkness thought that she had been able to search for a keyblade wielder, but what actually saved her was the magic spell Aqua had put on her.

[picture: Little Kairi]
Aqua: "Someday your light will lead you to a light that will protect you from the darkness."

The magic Aqua puts on Kairi saves her once year later.

[picture: Ansem Report]
Ansem Seeker of Darkness felt a special power within Kairi and tried to use her to find the keyblade.

Q7: Why can Kairi use a keyblade?
A: Because she was touched by Aqua's keyblade.
The keyblade inheritance ceremony is performed with a keyblade master touches someone using a keyblade. When Kairi was running away from the Unversed in BbS she grabbed Aqua's keyblade, which performed the ceremony. That is why she is able to use a keyblade in KHII to help Sora.

[picture: Little Kairi and Aqua]
Kairi touching Aqua's keyblade.

[pictures: Kairi with keyblade, Aqua with keyblade]
The keyblade Kairi uses is the same with Aqua receives after talking to Kairi: Destiny Place.
Mysteries concerning "Xehanort" and Organization XIII

Q8: Who is Apprentice Xehanort really?
A: Master Xehanort commandeering Terra's body
Master Xehanort wishes to bring back the Keyblade War and see what happens afterward with his own eyes, but once he found a way to accomplish this he was already an old man with only a few years left to him. Wishing to become young again, he finds Terra, and defeats him with darkness so he can take his body. That is the Xehanort that Ansem the Wise picks up, and makes his number one apprentice.

[picture: Terranort and Aqua]
Master Xehanort has taken over Terra's body, but Aqua tries to get Terra's heart and self to return to it.

[picture: Ansem picking up Xehanort]
Afterwards he loses his memory and is picked up by Ansem the Wise.

[picture: Apprentice Xehanort]
Calling himself Xehanort, he becomes Ansem the Wise's apprentice and goes into the study of darkness.

[pictures: Ansem Seeker of Darkness, Xemnas]
Xehanort's Heartless calls himself Ansem Seeker of Darkness, and his Nobody calls himself Xemnas.

Q9: Where did the Organization's coat and mark come from?
A: Xemnas remembering his human years.
One year after BbS, Xehanort as well as five other apprentices toss aside their hearts. Then the Nobody Xemnas was born, and the Organization which he creates take a lot of things from his memories as a human. But as Xemnas had two people who he was, Terra and Master Xehanort, he takes from both of their memories.

[picture: Master Xehanort in dark coat]
The coat used by the Organization was something that Master Xehanort originally wore.

[pictures: Terra's mark, Nobody's mark]
The Nobody mark used by the Organization is a similar shape to the mark Terra used.

[pictures: Roxas receiving his name, Vanitas and the X-Blade]
Xemnas gives Organization members names with an X in them. This has something to do with Master Xehanort's interest in the X-Blade.

Q9: What is the origin of Castle Oblivion?

A: It is the transformed version of Land of Departure after it was sealed.

Castle Oblivion's original form was Land of Departure, where they were in training. It is a special place between the realms of darkness and light, and has been protected for generations so that it is not used for evil. A device was set in place just in case of such an event, and after Master Eraqus was killed and Aqua closed the keyhole of the world, it put this device in action. It turned it into a castle which would draw anyone who goes there into oblivion.

[picture: Aqua in front of Castle Oblivion]

Castle Oblivion, which was born from Aqua sealing away Land of Departure. Afterwards the Organization, under Xemnas' orders use this place for research.

Q11: Why is Aqua's armor in The Chamber of Repose?

A: Because Aqua tried to save Terra.

When she tried to retrieve Terra's heart from Terra-Xehanort, they both fell into the realm of darkness, and she gave him both her armor and keyblade which allowed him to escape. Because of this when Ansem the Wise picked up Xehanort, he still had the armor and keyblade, which Xemnas then put in The Chamber of Repose.

[picture: Aqua and Terranort in darkness]

Aqua gives up herself in order to save Terra.

[picture: Xemnas in The Chamber of Repose]

Xemnas creates The Chamber of Repose, and puts Aqua's armor there which he calls "friend".

Q12: Why is Xemnas searching for The Chamber of Awakening?

A: To find Ventus.

The Chamber of Awakening is the room where Aqua leaves Ventus sleeping in Last Episode, and is a part of Castle Oblivion. As you can see from Xemnas calling Aqua's armor "friend", it seems Xemnas has Terra's memories and so is searching for Ventus, and is making the other Organization members look for The Chamber of Awakening.

[picture: Aqua with Ventus]
Aqua leaves the sleeping Ventus in The Chamber of Awakening.

[picture: Xemnas and Saix]
The only one who can solve the mysteries of Castle Oblivion is Aqua, so the Organization was never able to find it.

Q13: What is the true form of Lingering Sentiment?
A: After Terra lost his body, his thoughts gathered into his armor.
At the end of Terra's scenario, Master Xehanort had commandeered his body, so his thoughts took control of his armor. Afterward, the armor stayed in the keyblade graveyard, until KHII FM where "Lingering Sentiment" went against Sora. Because he saw that it was not his chosen one Riku using a keyblade, but Sora, he grew suspicious and thought he had something to do with Master Xehanort and attacked him.

[picture: LS and Sora]
After fighting him, LS says this because he feels Ventus inside of Sora.

Q14: Did something happen in Xigbar's past?
A: He was Master Xehanort's accomplice.
The number two member in the Organization Xigbar conspired with Master Xehanort when he was a human named Braig. Because of this, he knows more about Xemnas, who is the Nobody of Xehanort, than anyone else. That is why he often says strange things, and can speak up against Xemnas.

[picture: Braig and Master Xehanort}
Braig was involved with Xehanort's plans, but as you can see they have some sort unknown promise between them.

-Where he got his eye patch and scar-
As Master Xehanort was trying to get Terra's body as a vessel for himself, Braig tried to lure Terra into the darkness by fighting him. But the power of darkness that Terra released was

stronger than he would have imagined, and he ended up losing his right eye and getting a wound along his cheek. Afterwards Braig's ears become sharper, and his brown eyes change to gold. This is because he was influenced by Xehanort who he was working with.

-Things Xigbar has said in the past-
"Why are you always looking at me like that?"
(Days, Day 353: When he sees Xion as Ventus.)
"Oh yeah, he looked at me like that too!"
(KHII: Facing off against Sora in Hollow Bastion.)

At the end of Ventus and Aqua's scenarios, they went against him in the Keyblade Graveyard, and Ventus glared at him while frozen. This is Xigbar remembering that scene.
"How many years ago was that.... when those guys with the key shaped swords appeared here and fought. After they disappeared, a man who lost his memories fell."
(KHII FM Xigbar talked with Zexion about Xemnas' secrets.)

This is pointing to when Aqua fought Terra-Xehanort in Last Episode.
"So you are one who has been chosen by the keyblade. Though you're nothing compared to the ones I've seen before."
(KHII: Facing against Sora.)

"The ones I've seen before" is referring to Terra and Aqua, who he has fought against before, as well as Ventus, Master Xehanort and Vanitas.

Q15: What sort of people were Organization members 3-8 as humans?
A: We know now that they had ordinary lives in Radiant Garden.
In BbS we've seen one part of Xigbar's past, as well as members 3-8. 3-6 were apprentices under Ansem the Wise and did things like act as guardsmen, but Axel and Saix were just young boys who were friends.

[picture: Organization members and their original forms]
1-6 were the original members of the Organization, and during the time of BbS were Ansem the Wise's apprentices.

[picture: Axel and Saix]
Axel and Saix were old friends, as we can see from their conversation.

[picture: Lea and Isa]
Lea and Isa were friends. It seems during BbS they wanted to get into the castle of Ansem the Wise.

[picture: Zexion and Vexen]
Is the reason Zexion speaks so politely to Vexen because he was under Vexen's care when they were humans?

[picture: Dilan and Eleaus]
We can see that they were guardsmen of the castle in Radiant Garden.

Q16: What happened to Ansem the Wise?
A: He is wandering in the realm of darkness.
Ansem the Wise, who banished to the realm of nothingness by his six apprentices. In KHII, he wanted to release the Kingdom Hearts made from people's hearts that the Nobodies of his apprentices had created. The machine that he used for that end exploded, taking him with it. It looked as though he disappeared, but we know from the secret event in BbS that he was sent into the realm of darkness.

[picture: Ansem]
Ansem used Sora and Riku to get his revenge against his apprentices.

[picture: Ansem and Mickey with machine]
Ansem tried to test the heart's data form with his machine, but it didn't go as planned and the machine went berserk.

[picture: The realm of darkness.]
Ansem the Wise was thrust into the realm of darkness, forgetting all of his memories except those concerning Sora.

Other mysteries

Q17: What made Maleficent want to take over the world?

A: Because of what she learned from Master Xehanort.

In KH Maleficent tried to steal the hearts of the princesses of light by using Heartless soldiers. The reason she decided to do this was because Master Xehanort had told her "If you gather the hearts of the princesses you will be able to control the world."

Q18: Why was Pete put in prison?

A: It was a punishment for stepping on the hearts of others.

In KHII Pete tells us he was saved from prison by Maleficent. The reason he was put there was because during the Dream Festival he said things that showed he cared little for the hearts of others.

Q19: Why did Merlin have Winnie the Pooh's book?

A: Terra picked it up and gave it to him.

In KH he tells us that it's not really his book, it had just been in his bag. In BbS we see that it had fallen there as if drawn to him, and Terra had picked it up and given it to him.

Q20: Why was Scrooge so interested in ice cream?

A: He's always been interested in ice cream.

In Ventus' scenario we find out that the ice cream machine that Huey and the boys were using was original Scrooges machine. As he has always been interesting in making ice cream, that is why he was so interested in it in KHII.

Cecily. (2010, March 24). *BBS Ultimania - 20 Mysteries Solved!* KHInsider. https://www.khinsider.com/news/BBS-Ultimania-20-Mysteries-Solved-2546. [Archived: https://web.archive.org/web/20250717135809/https://www.khinsider.com/news/BBS-Ultimania-20-Mysteries-Solved-2546].

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Nomura Interview

Archive Author's Note: Non-interview content such as introductions, closing remarks, or unrelated images may have been omitted. This entry includes only the translated interview material.

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Translators: Heart Station

Nintendo Power: **We understand that Re:coded has a secret ending exclusive to the DS version of the game. Does that movie contain any hints regarding the direction of Kingdom Hearts 3D?**

Tetsuya Nomura: There is a hint regarding Kingdom Hearts 3D in the secret movie. Players will find out once they see for themselves, but the movie includes some shocking statements and dialogue that pertains to Kingdom Hearts 3D, so it's definitely worth watching!

Where does Kingdom Hearts 3D fall in the series timeline?

Kingdom Hearts 3D takes place after Kingdom Hearts Re:coded, making it the latest development in the Kingdom Hearts timeline.

Will any new Disney worlds be making their first Kingdom Hearts appearance in Kingdom Hearts 3D? How about any new Disney or Square Enix characters?

We're still deciding which worlds to include, but there may be a major overhaul in terms of the selection of Disney worlds.

One of the most intriguing parts of the E3 trailer was when the sky starts raining Soras. Can you give us some hint as to what that represents?

I can't go into detail on exactly what it represents, but it's basically a nod to the fact that something impossible may unfold, since it's not realistically possible for it to actually "rain Soras." The visual concept of falling is also an element I like to incorporate in the game.

Which development team is working on Kingdom a From this Secret Movie, new developments in the Kingdom Hearts series begin!"

Kingdom Hearts Re:Coded Tetsuya Nomura Interview

Out of the three titles he released on the mobile phone, the story of the Kingdom Hearts series finally proceeds to this new phase of gaming. Now director Tetsuya Nomura sheds light on everything, from Kingdom Hearts Re:Coded to the future of the series.

(Interviewer: Akira Yamashita)

The volume of content increases compared to the original mobile phone version!

First off, please tell us what inspired you to remake the mobile phone game Kingdom Hearts Coded for the Nintendo DS?

Nomura: The biggest reason was because there were many people who were unable to play the game due to the limited platform it was released on. There are many fans of the Kingdom Hearts series overseas as well, and the original platform Coded was released for is completely unavailable for them. Therefore, I figured if it was released for the Nintendo DS, then more people would be able to play it.

358/2 Days, Birth by Sleep, and Coded were all made for handheld gaming devices and seemed to be three side stories. How is Coded placed among them?

Nomura: Since it had communication components, I wanted to make it a title that was fluid on its own. It was linked with the Kingdom Hearts mobile service called Avatar Kingdom as well, so there were various developments in its design to include those elements. If the mobile phone's internal hardware was improved more, we planned to make it so it could be played online.

So why did you choose to port it to the Nintendo DS?

Nomura: The main reason was because it's the most popular handheld gaming device. When the project was beginning, we considered releasing the episodes for download via WiiWare; however, we wanted to make it accessible to as many people as possible. Internationally the Nintendo DS has sold the most units, so we chose it. But once we decided the platform would be the DS, we were still planning on porting Coded as it was. When we considered where we should request help with the development, naturally the company h.a.n.d. that helped before with 358/2 Days came to mind. The question then became, "If we ask h.a.n.d., since they already have the know-how of making a 3D Kingdom Hearts game, would it be better to make a full 3D remake?"

So it was after deciding to work with h.a.n.d. that it became a 3D remake?

Nomura: Yes. I think if it had been with another company the thought wouldn't have crossed our minds, but we knew that h.a.n.d. was highly capable since working with them on 358/2 Days.?When we first asked, we said,"Remake it roughly as it is." After that, the volume wasn't full yet so we changed to say, "Do it in full 3D and put in the panel system arrangement from Days". Despite this, taking away the time it took to actually produce the

remake, the development period took about a year to complete. The developers from h.a.n.d. said it was nearly impossible, but they gave it their best.

In the process of producing the game, the scale of the game got bigger then.

Nomura: When I first wrote out the proposal, it summarized the changes that brought Coded to Re:Coded. Ideas steadily came to me as I itemized the things I wanted to include like the panel system and the full 3D aspects. I was thinking, "Maybe we can do this, too" and "Maybe we should try this". In addition, when the interesting plans came together, the feeling overall from our two co. directors Jun Katou and Hiroyuki Itou, as well as our planning supervisor Tai Yasue from the Osaka production team was "Well, let's do that, too". As a result, the volume increased quite a bit.

The Osaka team also participated in production?

Nomura: The Osaka team took care of the electronic communication aspects. Since there were so many plans, h.a.n.d. weren't the only ones who had a hand in production, but the Birth by Sleep team from Osaka joined as well. We advanced by cooperating together.

What kind of meaning was put into the title of Coded?

Mr.Nomura, every title in the Kingdom Hearts has a strong meaning, what kind of meaning does "Coded" entail?

Nomura: If we compared them all the time, then they don't hold a clear meaning to any extent. Overall, the title comes from the word "code" meaning something to be deciphered, indicating that the mystery of the message left by Namine in Jiminy's Journal leads to a journey. Additionally, unlike the titles up until now, the developments aren't as dramatic with strong ups and downs. Instead they were distributed in short periodic episodes, each one designed to leave an impression with a mysterious keyword. Also since the Data World is the setting, I wanted the title to be associated with a very digital atmosphere.

The initials of the 3 titles Birth by Sleep, Coded, and Days in short lined up are BCD. Was this intentional?

Nomura: I didn't think of that at all; afterwards I was surprised when it was mentioned. With the Final Fantasy VII Compilation works it was done intentionally, however this time it was really done by accident. When I heard that if you considered Avatar Kingdom, it becomes ABCD, I had really surprised even myself! (Laughs)

Speaking of an adventure taking place in the Data World, there are many terms relating

to computers as a characteristic of this title.

Nomura: Since the time Coded was becoming Re:Coded, I was very conscious of putting in computer terminology. At first I worried, "Won't this give a difficult impression?" But since this was my only opportunity to put these sorts of vocabulary into Kingdom Hearts, I decided to go through with it.

As the director, what sort of story did you intend Coded to be?

Nomura: I had decided I wanted to make a compact story, not something extravagant like the other titles in the series so far. In addition to that, I wanted a story that stayed within the Data World. Furthermore, the last objective with the scenarios was that I wanted the stories to flow with the other two titles Birth by Sleep and 358/2 Days.

What was the reason for making Data Sora the main character?

Nomura: One reason was because I wanted to use Sora's Kingdom Hearts I design. Another reason was so that those who were playing the series for the first time could familiarize with the main character, even though it might wrack the avid fans brains a bit. For the players who don't know the back story, making Sora start at Level 1 was necessary so they'd be in the same position as the hero. If the real Sora was the main character, then the conditions dealing with the way Kingdom Hearts II's adventure had ended would be heavy content, thus instead Data Sora was introduced.

Different then in 358/2 Days, in Re:Coded the cutscenes are shown using still images to convey conversations, what was the reason for this?

Nomura: At first we were going to use the same polygons like in 358/2 Days to express the conversations. However, besides the labor it took, the player's reactions weren't satisfactory. Dealing with the DS's capabilities, no matter what we did the displayed images, there was a limit to how much their facial expressions could be expressed. That being the case, being able to see the characters nicely took priority, so we went ahead and used 2D pre-renders (a HD image made beforehand) that displayed their expressions better. Which way is better, it's up for the players to decide. There was the opinion though that we should try using the opposite approach of 358/2 Days and try 2D styles in Re:Coded.

Battle system with elements taken from 358/2 Days and Birth by Sleep!

The battles this time had an increasing number of fun actions to enjoy.

Nomura: At the time that 358/2 Days went on sale, since most games were intended for the

mainstream light players of the DS, I wanted to throw a stone into that tendency and make a game that had backbone. However 358/2 Days seemed to have had more backbone than expected; many people thought it was too hard. Therefore this time we tried something intended for those light players. (Laughs) Especially since the crosspad buttons of the DS are difficult to operate, we avoided technical fights as much as possible.

As for the direction we took the battle systems, we increased the number of selectable in-battle abilities that from our experience making Birth by Sleep we knew would be enjoyable. The more the better! Also, Yasue who was in charge of the Birth by Sleep battles was supervising Re:Coded's battles, so in that way Re:Coded inherited Birth by Sleep's blood. The base parts were from Coded and the panel system of 358/2 Days was brought back. So in that way, you could say that the battle system of Re:Coded is a combination of 3 titles.

The Status Matrix plays the central role in the growth system of Re:Coded, how did you come up with this concept?

Nomura: Original I had planned to do a renewed version of the panel system from 358/2 Days, but Yasue had the idea to use electrical blocks (electric toy made of small blocks connecting in a circuit) which I liked better. When I read the proposed design I thought the system looked very difficult, but then when I saw the illustrated image that the designer from the Osaka team had come up with I thought that the atmosphere was very fun and decided to use that. It's very important for the things you customize and play with to be visually appealing too! You can change the numerical value on the Cheat Tuner, as well as twist the dials and switches. Seeing the touchable screen, I thought that players would enjoy it.

Being able to modify the game's balance at anytime with the Cheat Tuner was a unique idea.

Nomura: In The World Ends With You (2007 RPG developed for the DS) players were able to adjust the game level of difficulty whenever they wanted, it was developed to model that. Co. director Itou was originally the main producer for The World Ends With You, so you could also say that the blood from that game also flowed into Re:Coded.

Re:Coded also features a new element called the System Area, how did you come up with that?

Nomura: The System Area feature was something I wanted to do in Coded but was one thing that could not be implemented into the project. When it comes to mobile phone games, to me there's the feeling that even if you play it once for a short period, you could play the same

game for a long period of time. In that vein, we prepared the System Area feature. It doesn't take long to clear them; however you could enjoy playing them a countless number of times. In particular, I really wanted to try to do 100 levels in the Avatar System Area during cross-player communication. When I first asked the staff to make 100 levels, they responded with astonishment. (Laughs)

The cross-player communication function can connect with other players with the game, and even when we don't really connect, it seems the device will still send a message.

Nomura: The way it connects and sends a message without really connecting was the same feature used in The World Ends With You. Since it was quite a popular feature in that game, we adopted it into this title for people who don't often get the chance to connect with other people with the game. The co. director Itou said, "We can cross-connect with whatever!" (Laughs) But really you can only cross-connect with other players holding the cartridge in their DS. We wanted the cross-communication circumstances to be active because the DS perceives various radio waves, so it's constructed to send a message.

The new developments in the Secret Movie reveal the beginning of Kingdom Hearts III!

In Kingdom Hearts Re:Coded, as expected, a Secret Movie was recorded.

Nomura: This time the volume of Event Scenes in the original version was big, so when it came time to put in the Secret Movie, there was hardly any room left. Since there wasn't going to be enough room to show something shocking, I thought, "let's make the topic of their conversation shocking instead". And so their conversation played out the way you see it.

We were surprised when Yen Sid said, "Supposing Xehanort isn't alone?"

Nomura: If you look back in the past titles, weren't you always fighting some form of Xehanort? As Ansem, as Xemnas, and as Master Xehanort, his form is different in each time and there is a reason why he appears differently each time. Don't you suppose that it's going to influence the future?

After this, it seems Sora and Riku will be taking their Mark of Mastery Exams. Does this have a direct relation to curing the "pain" of those connected to Sora?

Nomura: No, those are two separate stories. I'm thinking Kingdom Hearts III will be about going to cure their "pain". I plan on drawing out the story of those two's Mark of Mastery Exams in another title.

Perhaps that's the recently announced title for Nintendo 3DS tentatively known as

Kingdom Hearts 3D?

Nomura: Yeah, it's related to that.

Seems that a demo trailer was premiered at the American game show E3…

Nomura: In the trailer Sora and Riku are on Destiny Islands, and then in Traverse Town many Soras are shown falling from the sky. Those weren't real cutscenes from the game; the trailer merely portrayed the overall feeling of the game. At the moment, we are selecting the worlds that will appear; the Disney worlds used in previous titles will likely be changed out for the most part. We're considering using the Disney films I've thought about using someday as well as relatively newer films. The system components are also progressing, and development in each section has already begun.

About when will we be able to play it?

Nomura: I'd like it to be available as soon as possible, but… It was premiered at E3 in the 3DS line up in order to get a reaction and to take those reactions into consideration. I strongly feel that it must live up to those expectations.

When we were discussing in the Kingdom Hearts Birth by Sleep Ultimania, you mentioned that there were 2 new Kingdom Hearts titles other than Kingdom Hearts III coming up. One coming out in 2010, and one more being announced in 2011. It seems the title releasing in 2010 was Kingdom Hearts Re:Coded, but what about the other one? Were you referring to Kingdom Hearts 3D or Kingdom Hearts Birth by Sleep Final Mix?

Nomura: No, at the time of that interview I intended to hint toward a different project. However, focusing my energy on Kingdom Hearts 3D and Kingdom Hearts Birth by Sleep Final Mix comes first. Since a new Secret Episode is revealed in the Birth By Sleep Final Mix, I definitely want it to be seen. I think when you see it you'll be excited for future developments.

Moreover 2012 will be the 10th anniversary for Kingdom Hearts, it seems that you are planning something.

Nomura: Yeah. Actually, the real reason I went to E3 this year was to speak with the chairman of Disney Interactive Studios. The things we discussed are confidential, but our discussion had everyone's interests in mind. From within that conversation, I'm considering whether there was something about the 10th Anniversary that I could announce.

For the 10th anniversary there is talk of remaking the original Kingdom Hearts, what

do you say to that?

Nomura: I recently had a some interest in making an HD remake, but right now there simply isn't time to make it. Although, before Kingdom Hearts III releases, I do have to consider the notion that the series has become too long and that it's difficult for any new players to enter it in the middle of the story.

Finally, please share a message with the players.

Nomura: We made Kingdom Hearts Re:Coded a game with as bright an atmosphere as possible. The story is a bit painful yet hopeful as opposed to the sadness of recent titles. The gaming system is fun and incorporates a variety of rich aspects. There are also elements that make the game play time long, so please continue playing little by little, and also look forward to the new developments revealed in the Secret Movie.**Hearts 3D?**

The development team that worked on Kingdom Hearts: Birth By Sleep.

Should fans of the series look at this as "Kingdom Hearts III"?

Kingdom Hearts III and Kingdom Hearts 3D are not the same. However, it is a brand-new adventure starring Sora and Riku. The story is on par with that of a numbered title, and I'm sure the ending will shock fans.

Many of our readers are devoted Kingdom Hearts fans. (In fact, 358/2 Days won the readers' vote for Game of the Year in 2009.) Would you share with them some new tidbit regarding Kingdom Hearts 3D that you haven't mentioned anywhere else?

There have been installments in which players returned to Disney worlds introduced in previous Kingdom Hearts titles, however, the catalog of Disney worlds will be almost completely renewed with Kingdom Hearts 3D. I do have some ideas in mind already, but please keep an eye out as we reveal which new worlds and characters will be making an appearance!

.:[Kazuma]:.. (2010, November 22). *Re:coded Ultimania Director Interview & Scans!* KHInsider. https://www.khinsider.com/news/Re-coded-Ultimania-Director-Interview-Scans-1798. [Archived: https://web.archive.org/web/20250717144634/https://www.khinsider.com/news/Re-coded-Ultimania-Director-Interview-Scans-1798].

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Scenario Mysteries Interview

Archive Author's Note: Non-interview content such as introductions, closing remarks, or unrelated images may have been omitted. This entry includes only the translated interview material.

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Translators: Olivia/Heart Station

Interview with director Tetsuya Nomura

Same as always, this is our chance to toss questions at director Tetsuya Nomura having to do with the story revealed in Kingdom Hearts Re:Coded. We'll try to ask about the secret event from Kingdom Hearts Birth by Sleep and the mysteries involving Kingdom Hearts III as well! *(Interviewer: Ohno Yuuko)*

Data Sora can newly obtain a legitimate Keyblade during his adventure, but are there changes to the real Keyblade when that happens?

Nomura: No, it's a data version the entire time. However like with the first Keyblade, it wasn't created by someone else. It comes from the heart's connections with the data, hinting towards the story theme, "Can a heart be born in an existence made of data?"

During Re:Coded, Namine seems to have explained the reason for the "pain" mentioned in the journal to Sora and company, but why does she take the roundabout method of accessing the data in the Jiminy Journal and adding to it?

Nomura: At the point of time when Namine explained Sora's secret in the real world, she already knew that by the time Sora and company woke up she would be gone. She thought she wouldn't be able to speak to them directly. Thus she left a note in Jiminy's Journal, however she didn't presume what sort of form the meaning of the message would take when presented to Sora and company. Therefore Jiminy's Journal was made into data according to the King and co.'s assumptions.

Was the message presented in Jiminy's Journal prepared entirely by Namine herself?

Nomura: The very first message, "We must return to free them from their torment," was the only one by Namine, however the messages "Their torment has been lessened" etc. were transmitted by the data itself when Sora eliminated the bugs, implying that restoring the data would bring him closer to understanding the mystery of the message.

As for the outbreak of bugs in Jiminy's Journal, did they accidentally appear as a result of Namine adding data? Or did Namine intentionally devise the bugs in order to make Sora triumph over the "pain"?

Nomura: That occurring wasn't part of Namine's intentions. She couldn't predict that Sora

Heartless would take charge and bring about a crisis like that.

I see… Roxas appears dressed in the black coat in Castle Oblivion among other worlds too. Was that something else that Namine had not added intentionally?

Nomura: Right. Since Roxas and Sora together make up one existence, if there is a Sora made of Kingdom Hearts I data, then data of Roxas must exist too. Roxas says, "It's my personal duty to check whether or not Sora is ready to take the pain." However that role was not assigned by Namine, Roxas personally decided that goal and acted upon it accordingly.

Who was the person taken from the data of Jiminy's Journal that took the form of Riku in the data world?

Nomura: That wasn't someone from the real world's data, more like that was the data itself taking on the body of Riku in order to avoid being eroded by the bugs.

When each world is completely debugged, a scene is shown that was not seen in Kingdom Hearts I. Did those scenes occur at the same point in time as Kingdom Hearts I?

Nomura: Yes, they were memories deep in the data of the worlds recorded in Jiminy's Journal, however as a result of Data Riku searching after the worlds were debugged, they were tangible to the King and company.

In the final chapter of Hollow Bastion, it happens in the story that if the Jiminy Journal is completely debugged, then the existence recorded in the data will be erased. Then why is it even if Data Sora doesn't remember, Data Riku's memories remain?

Nomura: Data Sora became an existence whose purpose was to go about debugging, so at the point in time when he had completely debugged the data his memories were gone. In Data Riku's case, it existed in the main data even without the Jiminy Journal itself being erased, and since its purpose was to solve the mystery first written in the journal, it couldn't fulfill it until the debugging was complete. Once the mystery was solved, it too would lose its memories.

Throughout playing the lines "Restoration Rate X%" appears a few times, when it reaches 100% Sora Heartless begins to run amok. Does that number represent the growth condition of Sora Heartless?

Nomura: In Kingdom Hearts II, Sora's memory restoration rate was expressed that way. In this case it's basically showing how much of the data world was restored thanks to Sora. However it's also like an indicator of Sora Heartless' growth since it grew at the same time as Sora exterminated the bugs.

After debugging Traverse Town, the King says to Sora, "That day, your travels began here. Also on that day, I was here too." Does that mean that the King was in the same place at the same time as Sora adventured into Traverse Town in Kingdom Hearts I?

Nomura: Seems so. What he was actually doing becomes the previously mentioned "blank time period", but in this title, it's implying that the two crossed paths in the same place.

As for the story, the curtain has closed on Sora finally saying "thank you" to Namine. In your Kingdom Hearts II Final Mix Ultimania interview, you mentioned that Sora not having yet thanked Namine was foreshadowing the future. Is that matter considered settled now?

Nomura: Although it can't really be said that it's completely settled since they haven't exchanged words in the real world, there's naturally that implication. This time it's the data of Sora from before Chain of Memories saying thanks, however it shows there was a special connection beyond the passage of time between Sora and Namine. Additionally, it gives a contradictory answer to the implication that data existences don't have hearts shown in the story.

I'm going to ask about the Secret Movie now. Yen Sid tells, "With Ansem and Xemnas defeated, it means Master Xehanort will be revived." When Yen Sid explained about Organization XIII in Kingdom Hearts II, did he know this at that point in time?

Nomura: He knew, but it couldn't be avoided. At that time Xemnas existed as the main threat, so nothing could be done until he was defeated.

"If you release the heart of the Heartless and annihilate the body of the Nobody, then the real form will be revived." If those conditions are met, can others outside of Xehanort be revived too?

Nomura: It can be considered a possibility. Although it's what-if speaking, I think that if the members of Organization XIII were restored, they would become there true form.

Though he's a member of Organization XIII, Axel is shown in the end of Re:Coded in the memories of "pain"…

Nomura: Since healing the necessary "pain" of Axel's is different than with other people, if he is revived he will take a form like Xehanort's. In the end of the story, Namine says, "Those whose memories are sleeping inside Sora need relief." In the Birth by Sleep secret cutscene "Blank Points", certain characters call out to Sora, however in that scene Axel is the only one who appears and doesn't say Sora's name out loud.

Speaking of the Birth by Sleep secret cutscene, Ansem the Wise says that he hid his research results in Sora. This complies with what happens in Re:Coded when Namine says DiZ (Ansem the Wise) has hid something inside Sora. Is that mystery remaining unsolved?

Nomura: Yes. Namine added data to the Jiminy Journal in order to convey that the "pain" of those connected to Sora must be healed, but at the point in time Ansem hid the research results inside Sora, he didn't know that. Accordingly, Ansem's research results will become the key to healing the "pain" in the future of the story.

So even though Namine and Ansem acted independently, as a result of what the two did, it leads to one thing. And speaking of those details…

Nomura: Since that will likely become the story for **Kingdom Hearts III**, please look forward to that until then.

.:[Kazuma]:.. (2010, November 18). *Re:coded Scenario Mysteries Interview Translated!* KHInsider. https://www.khinsider.com/news/Re-coded-Ultimania-Scenario-Mysteries-Interview-Translated-1796. [Archived: https://web.archive.org/web/20250717145458/https%3A%2F%2Fwww.khinsider.com%2Fnews%2FRe-coded-Ultimania-Scenario-Mysteries-Interview-Translated-1796].

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Interviews

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The links "for easy access" have been changed so that they refer to this document - not outside of it.
The link to SQEXGAL used to link to a Square Enix News website (SQEX.INFO - Square Enix News), however, the address is no longer owned by them. The link, therefore, redirects to the archived website from 2012, March 11, as this is the closest date to the article (2012, May 11). SQEXGAL can be found on Tumblr [archived] and Twitter[9] (now X). Other translations by them can be found here (snapshot of the author's archive on SQEX.INFO from 2012, May 14) and here (last snapshot of the author's archive on SQEX.INFO).

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Translators: SQEXGAL and goldpanner

For easy access, please click on these links:

- Main Nomura Interview
- Scenario Mysteries

[9] Note: While their Tumblr links to this Twitter account, it is empty.

Main Nomura Interview

— When did you start thinking up the idea for Kingdom Hearts 3D?

Nomura: Probably during the production of Birth by Sleep. At the time there weren't plans to start another Kingdom Hearts title, but when I looked at the 3DS hardware, the idea came to me.

— It seems that every entry into the Kingdom Hearts series aims to utilize the features of its platforms, so what elements of the 3DS were you looking into?

Nomura: I thought that the Flowmotion ability was something I wanted to do in the next Kingdom Hearts, so why not do it now with this title? I thought of the Dive Mode function afterwards when I saw the 3DS in action. It's similar to the Gummi Ship mini game that appeared in KH1 and KH2, but this time rather than ride a vehicle I wanted the characters to drop directly into their destination world. Since the Dive Mode appears first, it feels like the game's system is established from there.

— What sparked the idea to introduce the Flowmotion ability?

Nomura: I've been working on a few action RPGs outside of Kingdom Hearts like **Final Fantasy Type-0** and **Final Fantasy Versus XIII**, so the first thought I had was I wanted it to clearly stand out from the others. I planned on showing that this is the direction the Kingdom Hearts series is headed. When I thought of the elements that really defined the Kingdom Hearts series, I thought of the bold sort of action that realistic characters can't express. My idea was that with Flowmotion, you'd be able to jump to impossible heights in comparison to how you could jump in the previous titles.

— It seemed that the Flowmotion system might dishevel the game's balance, but there was a lot of attention put towards regulating it.

Nomura: Well, the staff really didn't like it. (Laughs.) If the character could make a huge jump freely, then there is no telling where he'd go. Since you had to deal with every action the player made, the opinion coming forth in the beginning was that it was difficult. But since I explained to the staff that this was the sort of direction Kingdom Hearts was going, we did it anyways.

— In the games prior to this one, there were treasure chests you couldn't reach until you had obtained High Jump, but this time it seems you can take just about all the treasure using Flowmotion.

Nomura: It makes things interesting, doesn't it? Flowmotion is designed to take over the movement if you don't control it, but if you're able to use it well, you can obtain the treasure chests without needing the High Jump ability. It's a different style compared to the regular Kingdom Hearts games, which I think is one of the system's charms. I thought it'd be better this way rather than making it boring with restricted actions.

— For the title KH3D, we thought it was very clever how the '3D' doesn't just stand for 'three-dimensional', but also for the first letter of each of the three words in the subtitle.

Nomura: I thought of making it '3D' with three D's early on. However, while I was able to settle on 'Dream' and 'Drop' smoothly, the last one just wouldn't come to me. When we were at the point where we had a scenario, 'Distance' occurred to me from the distance between Sora and Riku, on the verge of meeting but unable to. There's one more unsaid meaning behind deciding on 'Distance', and that is the distance between '3D' and the number 3 itself.

—When you included 'Dream' and 'Drop' in the title, were you assuming from that point in time that there would be a Drop System?

Nomura: Yes, I suppose so. We have made KH titles before in which the story is divided between characters, but because some people were of the opinion that each story felt like a short-story, this time we decided to think of the plot as one string from the beginning. For it to be like that, we had to consider many things regarding how to best handle switching back and forth between which character the player is controlling. We considered whether we should let people choose when to switch, but we wanted some sort of thrill. Throughout the series so far there's always been that thrill of danger when HP is running out, but that becomes less of a threat as the player levels up. I thought, I want to put in something else on top of that, and it took the shape of forcibly switching the character being controlled with Drop. Also, if we had made the switching completely optional there would be people who only went along playing either Sora or Riku, and one of the characters could get too much stronger than the other, so it's also a means of controlling that.

—With more than fifty breeds of Spirits you can make friends with, the Spirit growth system is also a factor that makes this game worth more than a speedrun, isn't it?

Nomura: Well it was like, if I were to make a system where you get an enemy character onto your team and develop them, this is how I'd want it to be. I wouldn't want players to get enemies on their team by defeating them, I would want to have people experience the

process of raising them from birth until they got strong, and have them feel attached to the target of their raising. To bring that system into reality, it would have been weird setup-wise to make friends with Heartless and Nobodies, so we went with creating a new type of being called Dream Eaters. In the beginning there were less breeds, but I thought it was lacking variation, and I told the staff they'd probably need to make more than fifty. We had to show they were cooperating with Sora and Riku to fight enemies, so riding on their backs and the like with link attacks was necessary too, which made our workload incredible.

— Which Dream Eaters did you design yourself?

Nomura: The only one I drew myself is Meow Wow. I drew it basically all in one go, and didn't edit it at all. As for the other Spirits, I showed Meow Wow to the staff and requested that they 'please give them a design that is strange, charming without being too cute'. They drew for me in high spirits, and came out with one interesting design after another.

— This title is the first KH game in a while to feature Sora and Riku as protagonists.

Nomura: I heard from many fans that they wanted to play as Sora again soon, and I felt I wanted to answer them. However, the true protagonist in plot for this title isn't Sora, it's Riku. The story depicted in this title is of Riku's growth as he changes stance and makes the darkness he had been locking inside himself up until now into his own power. This is symbolised by Riku being chosen as a Keyblade Master at the end.

— Many worlds in this title are appearing for the first time in the series. How did you choose them?

Nomura: Basically, from the Osaka Development Team's proposals. Worlds they wanted to have appear, what they wanted to do there–I received proposals for both those things, and I chose from among them. You know, in the beginning there was even the idea to divide 'Fantasia' and 'Fantasia 2000′ between Sora and Riku in Symphony of Sorcery.

— Did the characters from ***The World Ends With You*** *appear in Traverse Town due to the Osaka Development Team's proposal, too?*

Nomura: No, in the first scenario they planned to have Leon and Cid and the others like always. However, it would have been weird for them to be in the Traverse Town in this title, and maybe it's time to give the "arrive in Traverse-Town, Cid says 'Hey kid' routine" a rest. So, when I thought about who'd feel fresh to put in, I thought it might be interesting to depict teenagers from a city like Shibuya coming into contact with country kids like

Sora, thus I decided to put in the characters from TWEWY. Also, another reason was that in this title, Traverse Town is a world in which many things must be explained, and Joshua is just right for the role of explainer.

— Being able to view flashback scenes whenever we wanted with the Memento feature was new.

Nomura: Production-wise, we were trying to make the story as deep and layered as possible, but then we'd have to show many explanatory cutscenes. I'd always thought there was no way to progress the story other than to increase the number of cutscenes, but I think we found a way after all with the Memento feature. It's like, people who want to enjoy the story can watch it whenever, and people who want to hurry and advance through the game can fly through and perhaps watch it while taking a break.

—We thought it was very refreshing being able to read summaries of all the past titles with the Chronicles feature too.

Nomura: Those were originally written by Oka (Mr. Masaru Oka: Scenario and Cutscene Director) with revisions by me. If we'd had time I would have wanted to do them in pictures, but we couldn't go that far this time. It is, of course, so people who hadn't played a title could follow along, but the text is written to be so clear that it even includes parts that weren't asserted definitively in each game, so if people who already know the story read along to see if they had things right, they may discover new things. I think pictures would have been a good way to do it too, but text does have the advantage of allowing people to reexamine the necessary parts straight away.

— The scene after the final battle where you get three multiple choice questions is a condition for unlocking the secret movie. That's a system that hasn't been used in the series up until now, isn't it?

Nomura: The truth is, we put that condition in as a trap. With only the same conditions as always, being able to view it condition-free if you clear the game on Proud Mode or having it unlock when you collect a certain number of trophies like up until now, there are some people who end up only playing to see the secret movie. That's fine, but even if people are solving it quickly I still want there to be a puzzle to solve. Having said that, it's very easy to choose the right ones. The correct answers all have 'important' in them. I wanted to make it so that you can solve it if you notice the regularity, and also I would have been in trouble if I had forgotten it myself, so I went with that. (Laughs.)

— Now we would like to ask a few questions about the future of the KH series. First of all, if you get the letters 'Secret Message Unlocked' in the credits for this title you can read a message in the Keyword Glossary. The English letters there surely mean we can hope for KH3 next?

Nomura: I will leave that to your imaginations. Well, you'll know the answer soon, I suppose.

— At the end of the credits, when Sora and Riku go into the light, the shape of the light looks like a III…

Nomura: I can't go into detail, but you could think of it as a secret message from me.

— Now, is there a possibility you will make a KH3D Final Mix title?

Nomura: I don't know what might happen in the years to come, but as of now there are no plans. Osaka Development Team have several titles on their hands, it's not the right time for that.

— At the end of the secret movie for KHBBSFM, an interesting message that said 'Birth by Sleep -Volume Two' appeared. Is there a chance that a KHBBS2 will be appearing?

Nomura: It seems that many people thought that, but during that movie there were the words 'A fragmentary passage', weren't there? That means a 'bits and pieces of something whole'. In short, a story for 'Volume Two' exists that ought to be told, but the story cuts off with those scenes. Because of that, I won't say there is absolutely no chance that we will produce a title to follow KHBBS , but there are no plans as of now.

— In an interview in the KH Days Ultimania, you said 'I'm thinking of a mystery KH that made the producer go "what??"'. Was that KH3D?

Nomura: No, it wasn't. I originally planned to make that after KHBBS, but we ended up making KH3D and the project was stopped. It's a shame, but we won't be starting that project again.

— If we were to guess from the plot so far, the next title must surely follow on from KH3D and depict the confrontation between the 13 Xehanorts that are seeking the χ-blade and Sora and the others who make up the 7 Guardians of Light?

Nomura: Well, yes, I think so. That will feel like it's leading to the conclusion of the Xehanort saga.

—We're intrigued as to who the Xehanorts will use to replace Sora as the 13th Darkness.

Nomura: I left that a mystery in order to intrigue you all, of course. It's unclear who about half of the other twelve are too, seeing as they didn't come out from under their black coats, so I would love for you to try thinking about their true identities. It's all set up properly who is sitting in each seat, even regarding people who didn't show up in the scenario of this title.

— Are there also familiar characters?

Nomura: There are many familiar characters. However, fundamentally who they are is still a secret.

— Are the 7 Guardians of Light the 7 people raising their Keyblades at the end of the opening movie?

Nomura: But among them, you're missing Kairi, who appeared in the secret ending of this title. Please look forward to finding out whether those seven will actually be the 7 Guardians of Light.

— Before the ending, Riku receives research data from Ansem the Wise. In the next title, will that be the key to bringing back the people who are sleeping inside Sora?

Nomura: You could say it's the key. That data contains the details explaining the way to connect lost hearts.

— Are there any Disney titles you'd like to see appear in the future of the series?

Nomura: I wish and wish, but I've wanted for a long time to have Pixar titles appear in the series. I'm already working on many ideas, but I can't say whether they will become a reality or not.

— Pixar has many wonderful titles, and we'd love to see them appear. Finally, when will next play a new Kingdom Hearts game?

Nomura: I still can't say when, but various developments have already started regarding a new title in the Kingdom Hearts series.

— More than one?!

Nomura: I am sure we'll be able to make some kind of announcement when the time is right, so in the meantime I'd like you to keep playing KH3D. There's a high degree of freedom in the play style and the story is full of mysteries, so I would be very pleased if you tried playing on a high level of difficulty and investigating the plot. Also, the mini game 'Flick Rush' is pretty exciting, so please give it a try.

Scenario Mysteries

The storyline ends with Sora and co. preparing to fight against Xehanort and his cohorts. Before the final battle takes place, we will question Nomura about the storyline of KH3D.

— Is the first cutscene we see in KH3D a flashback to 10 years before the first Kingdom Hearts when Xehanort and co. lost their hearts in an experiment?

Nomura: That's right. That's because in a sense it was the beginning of the story of this title.

— The Brown Robed Fgure, a Heartless born from that experiment, says "This world has been connected." While in KH1 that meant that the island was connected to the darkness, in this title does it signify that Xehanort and co. have connected to the dream world?

Nomura: It means both of those things. In that scene, the Brown Robed Figure becomes a "portal" himself as a result of contact with Sora and co., making it possible for the other Xehanorts to intervene within the dreams.

— Why did Xehanort and co. word things as if to try and wake Ventus who is inside Sora?

Nomura: They did so in order to tempt Sora's heart and have it fall to the darkness. In the story it also talks about how abandoning the self leads to losing the heart. When you see Vanitas (the dark half of Ventus who appeared in KHBBS) overlay Young Xehanort for a moment, that represents Ventus' heart reacting inside Sora.

— In the latter half of The World That Never Was, despite returning to the real world, why do Sora and co. stay in that form and why do Dream Eaters appear etc?

Nomura: Sora and co.'s form is due to Yen Sid's magic, so the way it works is that they can't turn back until they return to the Mysterious Tower, and Dream Eaters were appearing because Sora was still asleep. Also, ever since Organisation XIII was defeated in KH2, the The World That Never Was'

existence as a world has become uncertain. In the first place, the worlds in the rift between darkness and light have different rules than other worlds. The Mysterious Tower isn't always standing in a fixed place. Traverse Town too reforms its shape every time, which is why the version that appears in this title is clearly different than the version in KH1.

— Did King Mickey's time magic not work properly on Young Xehanort because Young Xehanort has the power to control time?

Nomura: Not Young Xehanort's but rather Master Xehanort's power. King Mickey was surprised at the time, seeing his Keyblade and noticing he harboured the power of Master

Xehanort. That Keyblade was designed as the one Master Xehanort used in KHBBS combined with an hourglass, you see.

—Were the 13 Seekers of Darkness, who were meant to be in different times, gathered by transcending time with magic?

Nomura: Just as it says in the story, to transcend time one must 'first' discard their form. As a result of the actions of the Brown Robed Figure, they all were in a state where they had gained the power to transcend time. The Brown Robed Figure explains the facts. The thirteen were summoned at the same time, this time thanks to Young Xehanort who borrowed that power. However, apart from Young Xehanort, that does not mean that all the members transcended time.

— In other words, Ansem and Xemnas were, at the same time, existing in the time and space of KH3D as well as having returned to their true human form after being destroyed?

Nomura: Yes, it does turn out that way. However, as I said before, 'The World That Never Was', where the thirteen all met, is a special space. The mechanics behind how they were all able to exist at the same time is a mystery. From KH1 on, Ansem has returned no matter how many times he has been defeated, perhaps the same sort of thing happened.

— Lea said the same lines, "Why do I always get the icky jobs," and "I'll always be there to bring you back," to Xion in KH Days when he brought her back. Does he remember that?

Nomura: The nature of the being known as Xion and all memories to do with her were erased, but he would remember other things.

—Why did Lea visit Disney Castle when he should have been looking for his friend?

Nomura: To search for his friend he needed the power to move between worlds, and there is no way to do that other than become a Keyblade Wielder. At the time, wanting to be made a Keyblade Wielder, Lea saw a message recorded by Ansem the Wise in the past and, knowing it was dangerous, used the Corridors of Darkness once more to go talk with King Mickey and the others. That's why after Maleficent left he was asking at the Mysterious Tower.

— So, in 'The King Departs', when Yen Sid said 'great sorcerers and fairies have hastened the flow of time in a different place for you'...

Nomura: Upon request, those who can manipulate time, Merlin and the three fairies who appeared in KH2, changed the flow of time in a special place, and there Lea received

hastened training in order to be able to use the Keyblade, basically. In the original scenario, we had planned to have Lea able to use the Keyblade when he ran to Sora.

— Ansem the Wise is an old acquaintance of Riku's, why did he ask him his name in the end?

Nomura: That's what you could call a "wise joke." (Laughs.) He's purposefully asking the same thing as he did in KH2 to a Riku who had changed into Ansem's form.

— While at the time Riku lied and said his name was Ansem, this time he replies with a bright 'Riku', doesn't he?

Nomura: Yes, because the main part of the plot in this title is Riku's growth. The point that unlike before he can declare 'I am me' is intended to show that growth symbolically.

— It was declared from Ansem the Wise's own mouth that everything can grow a heart.

Nomura: Yes it was, I thought I'd leave it clear in this title.

— Were the members of Organisation XIII that grew hearts unsuitable as vessels for Xehanort?

Nomura: That's not necessarily the case, however the details are a secret.

— Xigbar and Saix appeared as members of Organisation XIII. Did they return as humans like Lea and the others?

Nomura: The conditions of becoming a human have been met, so you'd think they had returned, wouldn't you? For them to have been with Xehanort and the others, perhaps they were collected after they had become humans and before Lea and the others woke up. You could say the same for the members of Organisation XIII that didn't appear in this title, however… I'd rather everyone use their imaginations.

Cecily. (2012, May 11). *KH3D Ultimania Interviews Translated!* KHInsider. https://www.khinsider.com/news/KH3D-Ultimania-Interviews-Translated-2602#Main%20Nomura%20Interview. [Archived: https://web.archive.org/web/20250717154238/https://www.khinsider.com/news/KH3D-Ultimania-Interviews-Translated-2602#Main%20Nomura%20Interview].

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Famitsu Interview with Tetsuya Nomura

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The link to SQEXGAL used to link to a Square Enix News website (SQEX.INFO - Square Enix News), however, the address is no longer owned by them. The link, therefore, redirects to the archived website from 2012, March 11, as this is the closest date to the article (2012, May 11). SQEXGAL can be found on Tumblr [archived] and Twitter[10] (now X). Other translations by them can be found here (snapshot of the author's archive on SQEX.INFO from 2012, May 14) and here (last snapshot of the author's archive on SQEX.INFO).

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Translator: SQEXGAL

[10] Note: While their Tumblr links to this Twitter account, it is empty.

— It's been over a month since the sale date dropped, how has the player's response been?

Nomura: Overall, people seem to think the story this time was difficult to understand. (Wry laughter.)

— The setup certainly was different and trickier than before. In their travels this time they were essentially supposed to go to the worlds shut by sleep, but in the end, an entirely different world sets the stage.

Nomura: There are other worlds shut by sleep, from the start which ones they would go to was not decided. Even Yen Sid didn't know which worlds they would go to. Amidst that, they were guided by two members of Organization XIII to the World That Never Was.

— What about when Riku looked upon the Brown Robed Figure and dived into another world, was it assumed he'd join Organization XIII?

Nomura: Since they knew he'd wake up soon, it's reasonable to assume as much, but that wasn't necessarily why the Organization had guided him. Still, they weren't ready to completely give up on Riku, they wanted to win him over into the Organization. However, Riku had developed a resistance to darkness and as a result, they gave up.

— Riku really rose to the occasion, especially in the final battle, shouting lines like, "Still there?"

Nomura: As tension leading to the end of the story, I steadily added bosses that weren't originally planned since it'd feel anticlimactic without a battle. As I was making progress writing the scenarios, I called the Osaka development team and asked if they could add more. The battle with the armor after the last dive was one that they added for me, I didn't think it'd be clearly understood without a fight sequence.

— Riku had a lot going on this time. In comparison to Sora, he has the charm of a dark hero type. How do you see him?

Nomura: Riku grows while carrying various troubles with him, he's a lot like a retro Square hero I think. Final Fantasy-esque, so to speak. On the other hand, I made Sora the sort of character you wouldn't see in a retro Square game.

— Sora's just a regular boy, huh. Why isn't he the daring hero type?

Nomura: There is the thought that the player is equal to Sora. Naturally, there are people who are not like Sora. (Laughs.) But I had the premise that a heart like Sora's exists within all the players. Sora is "ordinary", therefore everyone is "ordinary". I figure even if you're "ordinary", for something important everyone can exhibit a special power just like Sora.

— I want to ask more about the World That Never Was. Is that world a part of reality? Or is also a world of sleep?

Nomura: When that world's logo appears, it indicates the boundary between the dream and reality. When Sora arrives, it's reality and then goes into a world of sleep. Riku arrives in the sleeping world, and as you progress and the world logo appears, that's when it becomes reality.

— When both of them are in the reality parts, they don't return to their original bodies. Why is that?

Nomura: It's because of Yen Sid's magic that they've taken their old forms. If they didn't return to Yen Sid's place, their bodies wouldn't return back to normal. Incidentally, their new outfits were thanks to Yen Sid's magic as Sora suspected. Only "the mark of heresy" was added by Organization XIII.

— Riku fights a Nightmare wearing a black coat in this world, just who was that?

Nomura: That Nightmare was the personification of the nightmare Sora was having.

— What about Xemnas and Ansem, essentially they weren't inside anyone, was it due to circumstances of the worlds of sleep?

Nomura: First off, when Young Xehanort made contact with the Brown Robed Figure, that is to say, the Xehanort who called himself Ansem, his abilities were transferred to him. As a result of Master Xehanort tossing his physical body, he was able to exceed time, and this power was carried into the Brown Robed Figure. Thus when Young Xehanort made contact with him, he gained this power. Possessing this power. Young Xehanort functioned as a "portal", summoning Xemnas and Ansem each time they appeared. That's why Young Xehanort was there whenever they appeared. Additionally, when Sora and Riku dropped into the worlds of sleep, simultaneously Young Xehanort himself goes into the world of sleep.

— What about Vanitas?

Nomura: Vanitas is different than Xemnas and Ansem; he doesn't necessarily have a physical form. He reacted to Ventus within Sora, so that's how he was visible.

— After generating and before attacking Sora, were Xemnas and Ansem somewhere that exceeded beyond time?

Nomura: That's right.

— When King Mickey stopped time, Young Xehanort began to move. Since he can control time, was he breaking the King's spell?

Nomura: Young Xehanort wasn't using his own power at that time. The King's magic was broken because Master Xehanort was assimilating with Young Xehanort.

— It was when the figures started appearing in the thrones.

Nomura: Indeed. Time was stopped just as Master Xehanort was materializing. So he moved his consciousness to Young Xehanort's body. Reacting to this, King Mickey exclaimed, "That's impossible!" Young Xehanort was holding a Keyblade that he originally wasn't able to handle thanks to Master Xehanort's power. Though the keychain on it is different, the Keyblade he takes out is Master Xehanort's.

— I see. Young Xehanort himself is still in Destiny Islands and isn't able to wield a Keyblade yet.

Nomura: Right. Even when he appeared as an additional boss in Kingdom Hearts Birth by Sleep Final Mix, he wasn't using a Keyblade.

—By the way, Braig's dealings with Master Xehanort in Birth by Sleep make sense, he was to become a vessel.

Nomura: There is a certain reason for Braig to proudly exclaim, "As for me, I'm already half Xehanort." Isa (Saix) is included too. I think you'll understand the details about their circumstances eventually.

— What happens to the hearts of those who have had Master Xehanort's heart planted within them?

Nomura: They'll gradually be swallowed by it. As for Master Xehanort, he plans to control them completely. The planted parts of the heart are captured rather than disappear.

— Lea (Axel) ended up playing an unexpected role. I was wondering what was running through your mind when you thought to make him a Keyblade wielder.

Nomura: I figured since he had returned to being human, he wouldn't have much luck bringing back the people he wanted without some sort of power. Throwing his chakrams doesn't really count. (Laughs.)

— It'd be bad if he started a fire, huh? (Laughs.) Is he still able to pass through the Corridors of Darkness like before?

Nomura: Diz is also human and can pass through the Corridors of Darkness. Since Lea has the memories of being Axel, he saw the message Ansem wrote on the wall in Radiant

Garden and thought that was the only way he could travel. Of course, using the Corridors frequently is dangerous.

— After that, he came to Yen Sid hoping to train.

Nomura: Yes. Since the Mysterious Tower is in an unknown spot, first you have to enter via King Mickey's world. After that, they're training in a place where time flows differently, managed by Merlin, the great magician who can exceed time, as well as the Fairies.

— Did he have any prior knowledge?

Nomura: In order to wield a Keyblade, the most important requirement is to be "the owner of a strong heart." Regardless if it's a good heart or a bad heart, a strong heart is necessary. Right now there are a lot of things that Lea wants to regain. That desire is connected to the strength of his heart.

— Even though Axel had been eliminated in Kingdom Hearts II, since that time, had you considered having him appear again in his human form Lea?

Nomura: I thought a lot about that. Should I leave him as he was or should I bring him back again? However, when I considered the people that Lea wants to bring back, his existence plays a big role. I think Lea has successively become a key character.

— Incidentally, Ventus' body is in Castle Oblivion and his heart is with Sora right?

Nomura: Right. Even though he only appears a little bit in the end of KH3D, when Sora was surrounded by Dream Eaters, you see that he smiled because of it.

— I see. Were there certain intentions in that scene with the Dream Eaters?

Nomura: That scene was added in the final stages of production. It wouldn't feel right to have worked so hard raising the Dream Eaters without some sort of closure. Also, since Sora has obtained the power to open doors into the worlds of sleep, I purposely wanted to show a scene where he used that power.

— Speaking of the previous titles, about when do you start thinking of the 'next title'?

Nomura: It's a gradual process. When Kingdom Hearts was in production, I was considering ideas for Kingdom Hearts II and Chain of Memories. And when those two were in production, I was thinking of ideas for the next three, 358/2 Days, Coded, and Birth by Sleep.

— Were you thinking of KH3D when those 3 titles were in production?

Nomura: KH3D was put together relatively quickly, I was still concepting the story when I brought it to the table.

— What about in the secret movie of Birth by Sleep Final Mix…?

Nomura: Well… (Laughs.) Now that you mention it, that secret movie was referred to as "A fragmentary passage", meaning bits and pieces of something whole. A story connected to Kingdom Hearts exists out of that, but I don't know whether or not it'll be told hereafter.

— The secret message and secret movie of KH3D were loaded with things to wonder about. Is it finally time for KH3?

Nomura: I'll leave that up to everyone's imagination. Though, it might be a curve ball. (Laughs.)

— Lastly, a message for our readers.

Nomura: We've decided to distribute a KH3D demo in North America as well as Japan. You can play part of Sora's scenario in Traverse Town. So if your friends haven't played it yet, you can recommend it to them. And of course, give the co-op mini game Flick Rush a try. Also, an unannounced title is being prepared as well, though it's something lighter. There are still songs continuing to be distributed for Theartrhythm Final Fantasy so you can look forward to that as well.

Cecily. (2012, May 11). *KH3D Famitsu Weekly Interview Translated!* KHInsider. https://www.khinsider.com/news/KH3D-Famitsu-Weekly-Interview-Translated-2603. [Archived: https://web.archive.org/web/20250717160439/https://www.khinsider.com/news/KH3D-Famitsu-Weekly-Interview-Translated-2603].

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Archive Author's Note: As u/ZeroSora notes in their comment, this Ultimania was released in English as "Kingdom Hearts Ultimania: The Story Before Kingdom Hearts III" and is, as of 2025, July 17, the only Ultimania to be released in English with an official translation.

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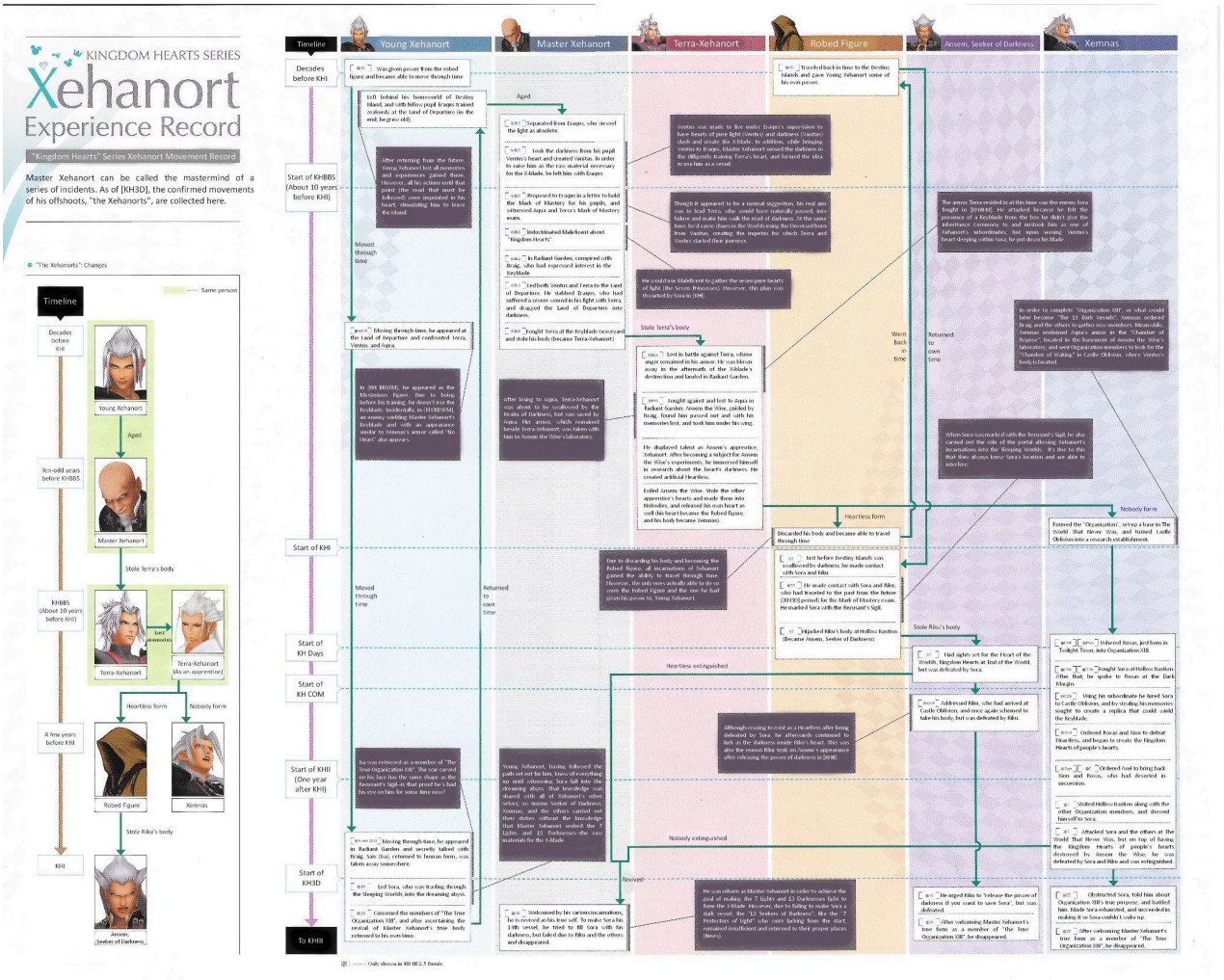
The Xehanort Timeline



Kingdom Hearts: The Official Xehanort Timeline Experience Record from the Kingdom Hearts Series Memorial Ultimania.

Kingdom Hearts: The Xehanort Timeline. (2017, May 5). Imgur. https://imgur.com/kingdom-hearts-xehanort-timeline-UHqQPKK. [Archived Image: https://archive.org/details/kingdom-hearts-the-xehanort-timeline].

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Series Lore

Archive Author's Note: Non-interview content such as introductions, closing remarks, or unrelated images may have been omitted. This entry includes only the translated interview material.
Original title of the post has been changed and uses u/ZeroSora's version for clearity.

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Translator: CharismaticCreator

Keys

A Keyblade is a mysterious weapon and key for all things which appears in the hands of the chosen ones. Using this weapon, which is proof of strength of the heart, Sora and his friends open new paths and stand up against dark forces.

Keyblades

Key shaped weapons which can bring about various phenomenon. They can destroy the existence of darkness and liberate the hearts from the dark creatures the Heartless. Also, as the name would imply they can also be used as "keys" which can unlock not only the "hearts of worlds" but also work on any type of keyhole and even will lead the wielder to the source of its great power: Kingdom Hearts.

Initially the Keyblades were forged as weapons during the battles over those who wished to obtain Kingdom Hearts and brought about the "Keyblade War." Reflecting on such events, the wielders of Keyblades today hold principles to use their power as guardians of the Light World and are often referred to as "Heroes of Light."

Fundamentally a Keyblade wielder only has one Keyblade, but switching the keychain can give the Keyblade a different form and abilities.

The Keyblades Tera, Aqua and Ventus use can transform into transportation vessels which allow them to travel through the corridors between worlds.

Becoming a Keyblade wielder

After completing the Keyblade Inheritance Ceremony, one must also be chosen by the Keyblade itself. The Keyblade Inheritance Ceremony involves simply coming in contact with a Keyblade owned by a Keyblade Master, and the new Keyblade wielder will then receive a

new Keyblade different from the one of the Master. The Keyblade choosing a wielder is based upon the strength of the heart of a person with no concern regarding good or evil.

The Keyblade is a symbol of the strength of one's heart and the amount of Keyblades one has is the same as the amount of hearts a person has. In Sora's case he has two hearts. There are rare cases where double wielding is possible. Also, in Sora's extremely rare case he did not go through the Keyblade Inheritance Ceremony but was still able to wield a Keyblade.

The Keyblade Inheritance Ceremony was performed on Riku by Tera, and Kairi accidentally touched Aqua's Keyblade which still meets the requirements to be considered an Inheritance Ceremony.

Light World Keyblades and Dark World Keyblades

There are Keyblades existing in both the Light World and the Dark World. Which is which is determined simply by whether they serve a function as an inside key or an outside key to the door to "Kingdom Hearts," and just because a Keyblade may be from the Dark World does not mean it would contain any sort of dark powers. During the course of the story, most of the Keyblades have been ones from the Light World.

King Mickey used a Keyblade from the Light World in BbS, but after KH1 began using a Keyblade from the Dark World.

Keyblade of People's heart

A special Keyblade created from the hearts of the Seven Princesses. Aside from having the power to reveal the keyhole to "Kingdom Hearts, the heart of worlds," it also has the power to open and remove a person's heart and the power to send a person into darkness.

Keyblade Master

Among Keyblade wielders, they are the very best. Generally, those seen as "guardians of light" who are accepted by their own masters will become a Master. Only Keyblade Masters (and those who have abilities on the same level) are able to do the Keyblade Inheritance Ceremony, also they can remove their own hearts and transfer them to different bodies.

King Mickey at the end of BbS, Aqua at the beginning of BbS, Riku at the end of KH3D all became Keyblade Masters. (Master Eraqus and Master Xehanort are also Masters).

Master Eraqus held a special place among Keyblade Masters, being chosen as the orthodox successor to protect the Land of Departure.

Keyblade War

A war long, long ago brought about by Keyblade wielders fighting over "Kingdom Hearts." As a result, the Light World was engulfed in darkness and vanished from existence. However, thanks to the light remaining in the hearts of children it was eventually restored as several smaller Worlds. Due to this, the truth surrounding the Light and Dark is told from generation to generation as a fairy-tale.

Interested in an ideal balance of Light and Dark, Master Xehanort believes there is too much Light in the world and thus intends on bringing about another Keyblade War.

χ Blade

The key to finding the true "Kingdom Hearts." It is read the same as "Keyblade," but all of the other Keyblades are mere counterfeits and much like the true "Kingdom Hearts" has existed since the beginning of the world, becoming the archetype for all other Keyblades. During the Keyblade War it was broken into 7 pieces of Light and 13 of Darkness, and thus does no longer exist, but with the proper balance of power from pure Light hearts and pure Dark hearts, it can be expected to be reborn.

Master Xehanort has been engaged in trying to complete the χ Blade for over 10 years. By KH3D he and his other selves are putting the plan into action and have gathered as the 13 Dark in order to clash with the 7 Light to restore the χ Blade.

When the Light heart of Ventus and the dark Heart of Vanitas forged together, the χ Blade that was created was an X-like shape of two Keyblades.

When the 13 Darks and 7 Lights clash, the χ Blade will be created. Master Xehanort is moving along his plan to do this.

—

Hearts

In the world of Kingdom Hearts, not restricted to just people and animals, but every existence contains a heart. The collection of all kinds of hearts would become the great heart – Kingdom Hearts.

Heart of Worlds and Key Holes

The worlds contained in the Realm of Light all consist of a Heart of the World. A Heart of the World is essentially the collection of hearts that make up everything in that world, and there is always a Key Hole hidden deep within each world.

The Key Hole to the Heart of Worlds is also connected to the Realm of Darkness. Generally the Key Holes are closed and on one hand the worlds are protected from darkness, but at the same time there is no path to get outside the world. If the Key Hole is opened, the barrier surrounding the world is destroyed so that entering and leaving the world becomes possible, but this also allows the darkness to seep into the world, so it can be extremely dangerous. In KH1 the Hearts of Worlds are open leaving them volatile, so Sora and his friends go on a quest to lock the Key Holes.

The Key Hole to a Hearts of the World is hidden from sight, but when a Keyblade is held up it will appear.

Because Riku received the Keyblade Inheritance Ceremony as a child, he was able to see Key Holes others could not.

The Key Holes Locked and Unlocked

Aside from the Key Hole to the Heart of the World, there are various other Key Holes. In all other adventures aside from KH1, Keyblades were used to open Key Holes on various worlds, including those that were not the Key Holes to the Heart of the Worlds.

How the Protagonists Interacted with Key Holes

KH1 – Sora – To stop the darkness from entering worlds, he traveled between worlds in the Gummi Ship to close off the Hearts of Worlds.

KH2 – Sora – With the intention of helping reclaim worlds, he had to open gates made by the worlds to travel between them.
KH coded – Data Sora – In attempts to restore the data in Jiminy's journal, he traveled through Data Worlds and opened their Key Holes in order to get rid of the bugs.
KH BbS – Terra, Aqua, Ventus – They opened the Key Holes leading into the corridors of space which Eraqus readied in order to travel between worlds.
KH3D – Sora, Riku – Challenging the Mark of Mastery, they traveled between Sleeping Worlds opening their Key Holes in order to free them from dreams.

Aside from KH1 where Sora closed Key Holes, all the other installments involve opening Key Holes.

Kingdom Hearts
A condensed form of the hearts of this world. Also known as the kingdom of hearts or the center of worlds. It also is the source of great power and a source of endless knowledge.
In the past, people viewed Kingdom Hearts as a great heart of light and seeking to gain control of this ended up causing the outbreak of a war that destroyed the world (Refer to P.8). Because of such an incident, Kingdom Hearts is now strictly sealed away and it is not easily approachable. Master Xehanort among other dark forces use all kinds of tactics to obtain Kingdom Hearts, but Sora is always there to fight and stop them.

Kingdom Hearts of Worlds (KH1 Kingdom Hearts)
The condensed form of the Hearts of Worlds known as Kingdom Hearts. The path to this Kingdom Hearts can only be open using the Keyblade of People's Hearts created from the Seven Princesses of Heart. In KH1, Maleficent and Ansem used the Heartless to steal the Hearts of Worlds and sought out the Kingdom Hearts of Worlds.

Kingdom Hearts of People (KH2, 3D Kingdom Hearts)
The condensed form of the hearts of people becoming a Kingdom Hearts. Organization XIII believed that completing this would make them whole again and began collecting hearts from the Heartless in order to create the Kingdom Hearts of People. The leader of Organization XIII had a different plan as he intended on using the Kingdom Hearts of People in order to

implant the heart of Xehanort into the members as vessels to create the 13 of Dark (Reference P.9).

The incomplete Kingdom Hearts of People floated above Organization XIII's castle.

True Kingdom Hearts (BbS, 3D Kingdom Hearts)

Different from the two man-made Kingdom Hearts above, this Kingdom Hearts has existed since the beginning of the world. It was engulfed in darkness long, long ago during the Keyblade War, but using its counterpart: the χ-Blade, it is thought that the True Kingdom Hearts will once again be revealed.

Master Xehanort's goal is to acquire the χ-Blade and open the True Kingdom Hearts to bring about a new Keyblade War.

The Door of Darkness and the Door of Light

The door leading to Kingdom Hearts is also the Door of Darkness connected to the Realm of Darkness. Only those shrouded in darkness may pass through the Door of Darkness, and to seal this door, a Keyblade from the Realm of Light and a Keyblade from the Realm of Darkness are both necessary. One must be in the Dark Realm and the other in the Light Realm in order to combine their powers and lock the door from both sides.

The counterpart for the Door of Darkness is the Door of Light. This door is how someone belonging in the Realm of Light who is lost in the Realm of Darkness may return to the Realm of Light and it will appear as if it were inside a person's heart.

King Mickey uses the Keyblade he obtained in the Realm of Darkness to work with Sora in the Realm of Light to seal the Door of Darkness.

When Sora and Riku were lost in the Realm of Darkness, they found hope in a letter they received from Kairi and were then able to find the Door of Light.

Seven Princesses

7 women who all hold a pure heart of light without darkness and their very existences are the foundations for light. They are sought out by dark forces as their hearts can reveal the path to Kingdom Hearts.

The Seven Princesses are Bell, Snow White, Aurora, Alice, Jasmine, Cinderella and Kairi.

Despite all the princesses living in different worlds, the Villains (Refer to P.9) were able to kidnap all of them and use their pure hearts to create the Keyblade of People's Hearts.

—

Worlds

The story of Kingdom Hearts surrounds the hearts of people connecting in the Realms of Light and Dark.

In Kingdom Hearts the main areas for worlds are the Light Realm, Dark Realm and the Between Realm. There are many, many worlds in the Light Realm, and each of those worlds make up the stars in the sky.

Realm of Light

The world where people live which is overflowing with light. There was a time long ago when the world was one, but it was destroyed and separated into countless small worlds. Each world is covered in a barrier which cannot be seen by the naked eye, and without particular forms of travel it is normally not possible to travel between worlds. On top of that, traveling between worlds without concern for each individual world could possibly cause disorder and thus it is fundamentally not allowed.

Each world contains a "Heart of the World" and through that a door can be opened which will break the wall of dark power, turning pieces of the wall into shooting stars which come hurling down and can be used as material for "Gummi Ships."

In attempts to prevent disorder in other worlds, Donald and Goofy change out of their Disney Castle royal clothing and hide their origins during their journey.

Data World

A virtual space world constructed from data. Aside from the world King Mickey reconstructs from the data from the first Jiminy journal in KH coded, the world DiZ created for Roxas's fake summer vacation of Twilight Town in KH2 and others also exist.

The Twilight Town in which Roxas spent his time was inside a data world in the computer connected to the pod in which Sora slept.

Sleeping World

In KH1, once Sora defeated Ansem, many of the worlds swallowed by darkness were revived, but a few of them remained dormant and sleeping. These became the basis for KH3D, the worlds trapped in slumber. Seeking out the Sleeping Keyhole and using the Keyblade on it will awaken each world and bring it back on the path to being reclaimed.

Travel between worlds

Each world in the Realm of Light floats in the place called the Sea of Stars or the Dimensional Sea. Sora and friends use the Gummi Ships to open up special corridors and travel between worlds.

Gummi Ships

A ship used to cross the sea of stars, developed at Disney Castle. It is made up of pieces of the walls of worlds (Gummi) and runs on energy from smiles.

From the outside the Gummi Ship may look like a toy, but it has the ability to cross the sea of stars and fight evenly with ships the Heartless use.

Star Shards

Broken pieces of worlds' walls which become shooting stars. King Mickey in KH BbS took a star shard from the Mysterious Tower in order to travel between worlds.

Between Corridor / Corridor of Darkness

One way to travel between worlds is using the Between Corridor, which a Keyblade wielder can open and utilize using the Keyblade's power. Not only that, but those shrouded in darkness can also use dark powers to open corridors, differentiated being known as Corridors

of Darkness. Going through one of these corridors, the heart and body of a person are eaten away at by the darkness, so it is even dangerous for those shrouded in darkness to use.

Terra, Aqua and Ventus were able to open the corridor gates which Eraqus provided and travel through them on their transformed Keyblades.

The black coats of Organization XIII, DiZ's red cape and the armor which Terra, Aqua and Ventus wore all help protect them as they travel through the corridors.

Realm of Darkness

A different realm which is on the opposite side of the Realm of Light. Generally people do not live here, but it is filled with Heartless and creatures of darkness.

The doors which connect the Realm of Light and the Realm of Darkness are the Door of Darkness and the Door of Light. Only those from the Realm of Light may pass through the Door of Light, and only those from the Realm of Darkness may pass through the Door of Darkness.

When Ansem took over the body of Riku, his heart was sent into the Realm of Darkness and even after regaining his body, he was stuck there.

Between Realm

The realm which exists between that of Light and Dark. There are fewer worlds than those which exist in the Realm of Light. Also, the space there is unstable and entrances to the dark corridors may suddenly open.

Where worlds are placed:
Realm of Light – Radiant Garden (Hollow Bastion), Destiny Islands, Disney Castle
Between (Close to Light) – Mysterious Tower
Between (Mid Close to Light) – Twilight Town
Between (Mid Close to Dark) – Castle Oblivion
Between (Close to Dark) – The World that Never Was
Realm of Darkness – Dark Margin

—

Forces of Darkness

Those who stand in Sora's way include the Heartless and Nobodies as well as those who control them including Organization XIII and the Villains. Sora and the others must fight with these forces of darkness in order to bring peace to the Realm of Light.

Heartless

One without a heart is darkness born from the recurring darkness. The embodiment of the darkness in one's heart which appears when a person's heart is lost to darkness. They have no knowledge or will, they simply run on dark instinct and go after the Hearts of Worlds as well as try to steal hearts from those with them in order to become greater in numbers.

There are various kinds of Heartless, but they are generally categorized in two main types; those who appear naturally are known as "Pure Blood", and approximately 10 years before KH1, during an experiment Xehanort (Seeker of Darkness Ansem) birthed the "Emblem" Heartless. Heartless began appearing in greater numbers in the Realm of Light due to Ansem's interference, and when he was defeated in KH1 it helped keep the numbers down, however as long as darkness exists within people's hearts, there will always be Heartless.

Many of the dark forces which Sora comes up against who use Heartless end up themselves falling to the darkness and becoming possessed by the Heartless.

Pure Blood

These Heartless come into existence naturally. If they are defeated with a Keyblade, the heart will be liberated. Many of the Heartless in the world are these.

Example: Shadow

The Realm of Darkness is overrunning with Pure Bloods.

Emblem

Xehanort and the other apprentices of Ansem created these Heartless through experiments of causing darkness within hearts. As proof of their dissension from Xehanort, they all include the "X" shape forged into their emblems.

Examples: Soldier, Sea Neon.

Nobody

Counterpart of the Heartless they are essentially not anyone and are dark monsters given an appropriate name. They come into existence when a person with a strong heart becomes a Heartless. Most of them are white bodied creatures, but a special few with especially strong hearts are able to retain their human forms when they become Nobodies.

Countering the existence of a Heartless being the darkness from a heart, Nobodies are the body and soul detached from the heart. Despite having no emotions, Nobodies have memories and intellect and are able to work in groups, and because their existence is precarious, if they are left alone, eventually they will melt into the darkness.

If a heart is liberated from the Heartless and a Nobody is destroyed, the human form will be restored.

Examples: Dusk.

Organization XIII members are able to give orders to lesser Nobodies.

Unversed

Born from feelings of anger and hatred, these dark monsters receive their names from not being well versed in their own existences. In KH BbS they appeared in the Realm of Light, frightening all the people around. They were materialized from the collected negative emotions from Vanitas, and when Vanitas was defeated by Ventus they vanished.

Example: Flood.

Dream Eater

They are creatures who nest in the worlds trapped in sleep and feed on dreams. They are separated into those who cause nightmares: “Nightmare” and those who eat nightmares: “Spirit,” and the Spirits will lend their powers to Sora and Riku.

Examples: Meow Wow (Nightmare), Meow Wow (Spirit).

Organization XIII

A group of powerful Nobodies who retain their appearances from when they were human. The organization is made up of 13 members and all of their names have been rearranged from their human names into anagrams including the mark of dissension, the letter "X."

These Nobodies realize that they are incomplete existences and believe that if they complete the Kingdom Hearts of People's Hearts they can become whole again, but they were destroyed by Sora and his friends. However, the secret goal of the organization was to supplement the 13 Darknesses, and when near completion would begin again as True Organization XIII.

Members: Xemnas, Xigbar, Xaldin, Vexen, Lexaeus, Zexion, Saïx, Axel, Demyx, Luxord, Marluxia, Larxene, Roxas and Xion.

No. 1 ~ 6 were the apprentices of Ansem the Wise, and the final member Xion was not considered an official number thus she was given the number "i" as an imaginary number.

True Organization XIII

Xehanort and his other forms make up the 13 Seekers of Darkness. They make up the 13 Darknesses and intend to clash with the 7 Lights in order to forge the χ-Blade. In KH 3D there are 12 members ready in the organization and of those 12 the current 6 known to Sora and his friends are Master Xehanort, Ansem, Xemnas, Xigbar, Saïx, and Young Xehanort.

Villains

Maleficent and Pete among others who appear as the antagonists in Disney films make up this group. Using the Heartless and dark powers they try to stop Sora from succeeding in his journeys.

In KH1, Maleficent and the other Villains conspire to obtain Kingdom Hearts.

Sora96. (2014, October 10). *Information from the Kingdom Hearts Series Memorial Ultimania translated*. KH13. https://www.kh13.com/news/information-from-the-kingdom-hearts-series-memorial-ultimania-translated?. [Archived:

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Nomura Interview

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Translator: **goldpanner**

[The reason there are 2 theme songs is because of the support from the fans.]

—At about what time did the production of KH3 begin?

Nomura: I began conceptualizing it right after we had finished with KH2. The actual development didn't begin until much later, but from the beginning we had planned to release it on PS4 and Xbox One. I've heard there are rumours that we had initially planned to release it on the PS3, but the PS4 was already the latest console by the time development had begun. The game was always going to be for PS4 and Xbox One, even before we changed the game engine (an all-purpose "program" that is responsible for processing all the main components within the game) from Luminous Studios to the Unreal Engine,.

—Unlike KH1 and KH2, this time development was handled by the Osaka Team. Can you tell us about how this came about?

Nomura: The Osaka Team has been responsible for handling the development of the handheld games like KHBBS, as well as titles like KH Re:COM and the HD remasters, but from the beginning I had always wanted them to grow into a team that could develop a main numbered title for consoles. They had gained plenty of experience with the KH series while developing non-numbered games, and the Tokyo team had begun work on another title by then, so the time was finally right to leave KH3 to them.

—At the beginning of production, what sort of things did you request from the team?

Nomura: The first world we had decided on was Toy Box from the "Toy Story" series, so I told them that I wanted them to make battles where you could hop in and out of robots. I also said I wanted to make the project of having time sensitive commands appear and pile up above the command menu the main focus. Later, when it had been decided that we would go ahead with KH0.2, we included that system as a sort of experiment.

—We were worried that Utada Hikaru, who performed the theme songs for every numbered title up until now, would not return for KH3 as she had been taking an extended break from music. But, she returned safely to the business and provided the theme song this time around also.

Nomura: We actually approached Ms Utada regarding new songs for the non-numbered titles too, but we didn't get the opportunity to have it come to fruition. But because this game was to be the latest entry to the numbered titles, the time was ripe to ask her for a new song. And when we did, Ms Utada was the one who proposed that instead of using an arrangement for the opening theme, we go with a second completely different new song: we were over the moon. I believe that it was the power of the KH fans around the world that motivated her to do such a thing. All the messages sent to Ms Utada from fans globally would have been a big encouragement to her, I would like to think.

—You are also an illustrator. What kind of illustrations did you have in mind for this game?

Nomura: I knew I would have to at least draw the box art, and I got depressed when I remembered how hard it would be with so many characters (dry laughter). I've always used A4-size copy paper when drawing my original pieces, and I do my best to fit everything into that. But when I started drawing the box art this time on a piece of A4 paper, I'd only drawn Sora, Riku and Kairi when I realised there was no way everyone was going to fit. I joined two pieces of paper together and re-drew it on that… while thinking to myself, if I'd done it digitally, I could have just copy-pasted the three people I'd already drawn (laughs). That illustration dragged itself out until right before the deadline: coloring included, it took me about a week of straight work to finish. For some reason, the packaging manufacturing deadline for the overseas version was a lot earlier than the domestic one, so I worked on it in the midst of people urging me to hurry since "at this rate, the international version is just going to have a plain black cover!"

[He felt he couldn't make KH3 without including Pixar works]

—After KH2 was released, Pixar was purchased by Disney. Did this expand the range of worlds available for you to include in this title?

Nomura: Actually, we did make a few trial models of characters from Monsters Inc and Toy Story during the production of KH2, and we did begin negotiations to have them appear in the game. We did have to shelve them in the end, but I felt I couldn't make KH3 without including Pixar works, so I started up negotiations again—and this time, the situation between Disney and Pixar had changed, and we were able to make it happen. After we had

finished deciding all the worlds for this game, Disney and Pixar kept releasing fascinating titles. I found myself wishing over and over again that we could have included this and that.

— So including Monsters Inc. and Toy Story in KH3 were highest in priority for you.

Nomura: Even so, the hurdles we had to jump to get there were higher than I had expected. To begin with, I went to America twice for negotiations, where it turned out that we couldn't move forward with that until we had a plot. So, I wrote the plot of Toy Box at a stage where the main story still hadn't been written. After that, we were in correspondence for quite a long time, until the plans were boiled down into something they finally approved. It was the first time we had worked with Pixar, and we built a relationship with them through Toy Story which we used as a base when suggesting other titles.

—We were surprised at how the plot of the Pixar worlds were continuations of the original movies.

Nomura: Originally, the basic pattern of the KH series was that Sora and the others get involved in scenes that depict the happenings of the original films. The Tangled and Frozen worlds fit that description. However, with Toy Story and Monsters Inc., upon request from the creators, we went with a pattern of depicting a period set after the movie as an "authorized history." Which pattern a world would follow depended greatly on the ideas of the creators and producers of the movies.

—The stories based on the events of the original movies still managed to cleverly incorporate episodes involving Sora and his friends, didn't they?

Nomura: That is the achievement of Oka (Masaru Oka: Scenario + Cutscene Director) and the level design team (the team that creates enemy positioning and the shape of the maps.) In recent KH titles, Oka has been discussing and deciding the location and flow (of battles and cutscenes) with the level design team and creating tentative scenarios that fit. I touch things up in the final stages, but what I correct is mostly to do with dialogue. The events of the story of each world mostly prioritize level design.

—Disney has now acquired companies other than Pixar, such as Marvel and LucasFilm. Will this expand the range of worlds available for future games?

Nomura: Yes. However, the contracts necessary to use a franchise in a game are each tied to their own separate companies, and in several cases there are existing contracts with other game companies. So, it's not as simple as "the company has been acquired by Disney, so it can appear in KH." We were only able to use a single cut of Mickey in KH1 for a similar reason. Another game company was releasing a Mickey game around the same time, so they

told us we couldn't use him at all. But I was persistent, and I ended up receiving an idea for a compromise: "You can use him if it's just one cut, and it's just his silhouette, and he's just waving from far away or something." I deliberated over how to make the very most of that one chance, and the result is that appearance of his in KH1.

[We created new graphics while using the original films as reference]

—Among the worlds of KH3, Olympus is a constant that has appeared in nearly every game in the series so far. Do you have particular feelings towards it?

Nomura: There isn't really a reason for that, it's honestly just by chance. I mean, the reason it appears in KH3 is simply because it made for a perfect beginning to the journey: Sora going to visit a hero who had once regained lost powers, in order to try and regain his own. If I were to say I had particular feelings about it, I'd say that I love having Hades appear. He's a very funny character, and I start wanting to watch him moving about.

—The 100 Acre Wood is another constant, come to think of it.

Nomura: That's because Pooh is the kind of character who makes you feel safe just by being there (laughs.) Since I knew that the other worlds would take up a lot of production time, I thought from the start that I wanted to make the 100 Acre Wood a place for you to take a breather from the adventure, with a light minigame.

—In the 100 Acre Wood, the graphics switch to a unique style where the character outlines are much stronger.

Nomura: That processing wasn't added to the game until the last stages of development. For KH3 we used what we call the Kingdom Shader to change the feel of the graphics for each world, but Pooh's world was just normal. So, I had them make the graphics less like the cartoon and more like the original picture book. When trying to bring out that storybook feel, I personally was very particular about the color of the sky.

—On the opposite end of the spectrum, the Caribbean was overwhelmingly detailed - almost lifelike.

Nomura: In a way, that world was what determined the graphics quality for the whole game. In the early stages of development, I created a video of Sora sailing the sea and riding enemies through the skies for an in-house presentation session. The quality of the graphics in that one-off test clip were so high, and it looked so overwhelmingly good among all the other titles that our company was developing at the time, that it completely stole the show at that presentation session. I sensed that this world would be a highlight right from those early days. By the way, the coat Sora wears in the Caribbean is designed after a coat of my own that I

gave the staff as a reference upon my request. I think I might not have gotten it back yet (laughs).

—Of all Sora's world-specific forms, he undergoes quite a drastic change in Monstropolis.

Nomura: In the beginning, I considered having him wear some kind of monster onesie, like Boo does in the original film, but thanks to Pixar's wishes he ended up turning into a monster. In the original Monsters Inc., there are rather strict rules concerning the colors and eye shapes that can be used in character designs. So, after they had decided upon designs that fit those rules, I made final adjustments of my own. Sora in particular started off with a soft shiny body that I felt wasn't quite coming together, so I put fur on him. But then Pixar instructed me not to make him look too much like a cat—it was a struggle to find a compromise. And so, even though it looks like Sora has cat ears they're actually horns (laughs.)

—You were able to recreate the graphics of the worlds based on CG titles to a very high level. Did you use graphics data from the original films?

Nomura: We did receive some to use as reference, but due to factors such as the number of polygons and the data format it's not something that's possible to use directly. So, we recreated everything anew, trying to make it look the same as the original film. For the cutscenes, the staff in charge watched the original films over and over again, adjusting the camera work and blocking. If you think that we recreated the graphics to a high level, it's all thanks to the hard work of the staff.

—In contrast, Classic Kingdom is done in the style of an old LCD game. People who remember those days find it so nostalgic.

Nomura: My vision was that since each minigame is based on a different short film, I wanted to make each minigame into a world, just like the other Disney works. Although even as worlds, they don't have maps, they have 1 screen (laughs). LCD games were booming when I was a child, but my parents wouldn't buy them for me. So, I bought them for myself when I grew up. I have dozens of them. I had wanted to make a smartphone RPG with LCD game style graphics, and had even submitted a project plan unrelated to KH. If I could, I'd love to make a real Classic Kingdom LCD game handheld.

The developments of the Dark Seeker Saga as envisioned since KH2

—With this title, the Dark Seeker Saga is complete. From when did you have this conclusion in mind?

Nomura: I started envisioning it as the Dark Seeker Saga at the time of KH2. I more or less had the outline of the story decided around then. There are parts that changed from my initial

vision as I went on writing the scenarios, for as manga artists often say, characters have a mind of their own. However, the main flow of events didn't change.

—In KH2, we learned that the Ansem who appeared in KH1 was not the real one. Did you have that planned from the start?

Nomura: When I was writing the scenario for kH1, I thought to myself, "Ansem sure is super evil for a so-called wise man" (laughs). That feeling was the seed that influenced the setup from KH2 on.

—We never would have guessed how important Xigbar ended up being when he first appeared in KH2, either.

Nomura: I hear that a lot, but on the inside I meant for Xigbar to be a character with a special position from early on, which is why I had him do suspicious things. During voice recording for KH2, while listening to Hochu Otsuka's voice (Xigbar's voice actor), I felt that there was no way Xigbar was just an ordinary soldier in the system—he definitely had something going on behind the scenes—and midway through production the setup developed into what we have now. That kind of thing does happen sometimes: the setup behind a character transforming as I bounce off a voice actor.

—The story's endgame where all your friends and foes gather at the Keyblade Graveyard was a masterpiece.

Nomura: I know each fan has their own different beloved character, so I wanted to give each one an appropriate moment. But in the end there was too much story that had to be told then, and I ended up being restricted to the minimum necessary to move Sora forward. The truth is, the Keyblade Graveyard was the toughest part I faced when writing the scenario. Shining the spotlight on each character one by one allows you to depict the unfolding developments with time and care, but the flow of the game requires the player to control Sora and fight battles. Ideally, I should have had characters with connections fight it out one by one and settle things that way, but that would have required too much exposition. On the other hand, I did think of limiting the number of enemies you actually battle and finishing others with cutscenes, but it didn't feel right. At the end of deep worry and thought, I narrowed my aim and ended up with the way it is now, which prioritizes rhythm.

—The Final World is introduced as a place that is very important to the story. What kind of world is it?

Nomura: It's the world where those one step from death end up; a place connected to the Station of Awakening. The Station of Awakening as we have seen it so far has been a stained

glass pillar standing in pitch darkness, and it represents the inside of the heart. But this time I wanted to represent it more tangibly, so I went with the setup that the Final World is like a portal for each heart. As said in the game, "the edges of sleep and death touch:" hearts that are in a state of sleeping are in the Station of Awakening, and if they continue to walk forward from there, they'll end up in the Final World. That's the sort of image I was going for.

—Was there a reason that no FF characters appeared in the game this time?

Nomura: It was simply that there was no room. There were so many characters appearing in the main story that in the end I wasn't able to create opportunities to use the FF characters. Although, I did have the team make polygon models of Leon and some others just in case. They also made the Fairy Godmother from Cinderella and a few others, but by the end I just couldn't find a place to use them. The production staff were mad at me.

[What world are Sora and Riku in, in the secret movie…?]

—Both the epilogue and secret movie made quite the impact. Does what we see in the epilogue mean that the characters from KH Union Cross have been revived?

Nomura: Yes. The Keyblade Masters from the distant past known as the Foretellers have transcended time to gather once again. Xigbar too was once a Foreteller: Luxu, who has been alive for a very long time, changing his form.

—Xigbar says, "I had a role to play. And after all these years, it's done." What was his role?

Nomura: He was directed by his mentor, someone called the Master of Masters, to make sure that they Keyblade entrusted to him was passed down into the future. This was tied to another mission… which will be made clear in a future game.

—We really want to know what is inside the black box...

Nomura: Everyone asks that, but it's the key to the future games. As the Master of Masters said in KH X BC, it's a surprise~ (laughs).

—In the last part of the epilogue, seven black pieces are brought out to be used in a new game. Do six of those represent the six apprentices of the Master of Masters?

Nomura: Yes.

—Who is the remaining one?

Nomura: It's… someone you may be able to guess, but it's a secret.

—So, is Sora the white piece?

Nomura: Well, maybe… Either way, the epilogue is hinting at what is to come after the Dark Seeker Saga.

—We see. Next, we'd like to ask about the secret movie. Does that scene follow on from the ending?

Nomura: Yes. When Sora disappears in the ending, he ends up in the world in the secret movie. That's the flow of events.

—Is Sora in the world of the World Ends With You (a game Nomura previously directed)?

Nomura: It does look like it. But there's more meaning in the fact that it is not Shibuya (written with kanji), but Shibuya (written with katakana). Also, Sora promised Neku and the others in KH3D that he would meet them in Shibuya (written in katakana), but that doesn't mean it's directly connected to this movie.

—The scenery of the world Riku is in is also very exciting. It feels like it's trying to summon past memories. The man looking down from the roof of the building looks a lot like Yozora from VERUM REX, the game that was popular in the Toy Box world...

Nomura: Yeah, he's Yozora.

—So that means that's the world of VERUM REX?

Nomura: Yes, that's right. I know the visuals have some people thinking it's the same as a title I had been working on in the past, but it isn't. There are parts of the unreleased project that have been cooking along inside me, so there's a chance that I may have some overlap of ideas, but VERUM REX is a completely different thing. Nobody knows what was in the project that wasn't released, and VERUM REX doesn't even exist yet, so perhaps it's difficult to understand right now, but I will just say that they are different things and leave it at that.

—Who was the person in the black robe who made a heart with their hands against the moon in the final scene?

Nomura: The Master of Masters. Nobody else would be messing around while dressed like that (laughs).

There are things that need to be depicted before KH4 can be made

—Is work on the upcoming DLC going well?

Nomura: At this point in time, I have given the staff a list of the battle elements I want to do, and they are investigating. As for additional story, I think it will mainly be expanding on the Keyblade Graveyard things I mentioned before when I talked about narrowing my aim. I do plan to complete it as soon as possible, but as we are working on it alongside preparation for the next project, I still can't tell you when to expect it to be released. For the time being, we are planning to present several pieces of content as one pack rather than release several separate things.

—Final Mixes have been a staple of the KH series. Do you plan to release one for KH3 too?

Nomura: I have no plans for a separately released Final Mix title. I am thinking of adding an English mode to the DLC pack. Also, we were moderate with the battle difficulty levels due to taking the tendencies of modern players into consideration, but many people have let us know that they want to fight harder enemies. So, I plan to release a Critical Mode soon as a free download, and add Final Mix type tough enemies to the purchasable DLC pack.

—With the end of the Dark Seeker Saga creating a moment of punctuation to the KH series, how do you feel?

Nomura: I expected to feel relieved once it was over, but it hasn't been like that at all. Even now I am right in the middle of work on DLC, and I'm involved in several other titles all at the same time. I also want to hurry up and start work on the next title, so honestly it doesn't feel like any kind of punctuation to me.

—The fans would love to know what's coming next in the KH series…

Nomura: No official projects have been decided, so I can't say anything at this point. The current top priority for the KH series is the KH3 DLC, and we are also in the middle of preparing a large update for KH Union Cross. For the time being, I do have two ideas for future developments, and there's another special project I have to think about. I hope to be able to tighten these up into two future titles. Also, there are things that need to be depicted before KH4 can be made, so I am also considering the possibility of doing another title in between. So that we can move on past the Dark Seeker Saga, I hope for the support of the fans of the KH series.

Secret of this title that only he knows:

There were theories that the cat next to Ventus on the box art was Chirithy, but it's my pet cat. Also, the protuberances on the corners of the clock tower are actually black robed figures.

Sign. (2019, March 12). *Kingdom Hearts 3 Ultimania - Main Nomura Interview Translated*. KHInsider. https://www.khinsider.com/news/Kingdom-Hearts-3-Ultimania-Main-Nomura-Interview-Translated-14763. [Archived: https://web.archive.org/web/20250719192625/https://www.khinsider.com/news/Kingdom-Hearts-3-Ultimania-Main-Nomura-Interview-Translated-14763].

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Yasue Interview

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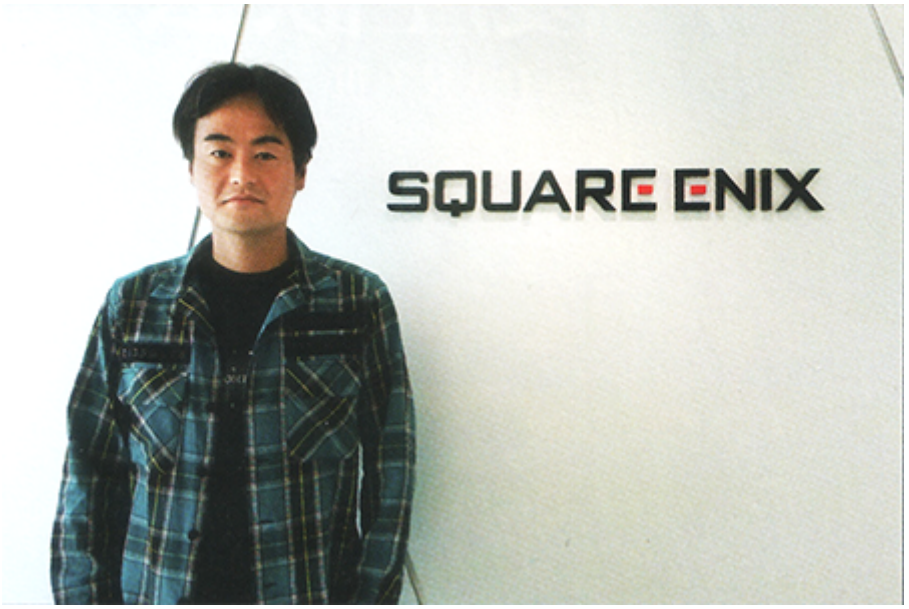
Translator: **goldpanner**



Q: When development began, what kinds of requests did you receive from director Tetsuya Nomura?

A: "I want you to make theme part attractions," and "I want to play LCD handheld games," and "I want to pilot robots in the Toy Story world," and the like. He had a lot of requests. Nomura often comes out with completely unexpected requests, but once we actually try making them, they fit perfectly into the world of KH and make the game all the more exciting. So, I put my faith in his vision and hit the ground running without second guessing.

Q: Did you find the simultaneous release of the the PS4 version, Xbox One version, and international versions tough?

A: The PS4 and Xbox One perform differently, plus top of the range models exist for both, so in order to bring out the best performance and quality on each machine, the programming and technical artist teams worked together to decide on specs and optimization. For the international version, once Disney had checked the translated scenario, English voice work needed to be recorded and English facial animations needed to be made. But since progress was simultaneous with the Japanese version, we only had a very short time to focus on it. It was stressful right up to the end. There were many passionate discussions about how to finish about ten hours of cutscenes without a drop in quality. We finished it just in time.

Q: Were there any elements from KH0.2 that you used in the production of KH3?

A: From KH0.2, we got feedback about the situation command implementation and the way the player characters actions connect. In KH3, we implemented several kinds of commands with time limits, such as the Form Changes and Grand Magic. The prototype of that system was something we trialled and worked on for KH0.2. Then, we also received feedback from some KH0.2 players who wanted us to improve Aqua's responsiveness. In practical terms, we made it easier to dodge after attacking or using Air Slide after jumping and other such chain moves by having a button to press to instantly move into the next action. We brought the feel of those controls to KH3. The action in the KH series is continuously evolving: the responsiveness of button presses get better with every new title.

Q: What was the hardest thing about your dealings with Disney and Pixar?

A: I think you can make something good much quicker if you can speak openly rather than sugarcoat your opinions. During development we had positive exchanges of opinion with Disney, but as both we and the creators on their side are very serious about our craft, sometimes we had different ways of thinking. Whenever this happened, I would take what we wanted to do and what we knew Disney thought was important, and I would go directly to them to talk in frank and concrete terms, or send an email if that wasn't possible. If I felt I was having a hard time expressing my feelings via text in an email, I'd put the parts I wanted to emphasize in big red letters, trying to make it as easy to understand as possible (laughs).

Q: What led you to add Keyblade transformations?

A: Lingering Will, the KHIIFM secret boss, transformed his Keyblade, and that was what gave birth to the idea of Sora changing the shape of his. First, we felt it was very important to make the transformations easy to see, and to make the battle game play for each transformation obviously different. So, the motto of our weekly character action test meetings was "more flashy, more dynamic," which led us to add more action to the transformations. However, this would cause our workload to inflate. For example, when the movement of Favorite Deputy became more powerful than we had expected, we had to go back to the already finished Hero's Origin and boost its action and effects too… Plus, once we'd finish work on a Keyblade transformation, next we'd have to make it so you could switch through three of them using the direction pad during a combo, and other new factors that kept being added. It happened over and over. Usually that way of working is extremely aggravating, but our staff had open hearts and positive minds and did their very best for me. Thanks to that we were able to make something good in the end.

Q: The most-used world in the series, Olympus, appears here again. Did you stress over differentiating it from past iterations?

A: I wanted to add some gameplay that would be brand new for that world, but I didn't really stress about it. The concept for the maps this time was "spacious vertically, not just horizontally," so the god-tier sense of scale on Mt Olympus was an ideal setting. When development began and we started work on the Olympus world, that was the birth of several gameplay features that made use of verticality, such as dive attacks and wall running.

Q: How did you select the characters for links?

A: Regarding links: During talks with Disney, we were asked to stop calling characters from other worlds into whichever world Sora was currently in. But, that meant we wouldn't be able to make a summon technique like past titles. So, we went with the premise that a connection with Sora's heart calls the characters forth as magic. I thought combining them with magic would have the most impact, so we settled on having "Simba+Fire" and "Ariel+Water" and the like.

Q: What policies did you have working on the Gummi ship, which received a massive power up?

A: The concept was being able to adventure anywhere in 360 degrees in space. The Gummi ship in past titles mainly involved shooting game style battles, but this time we wanted to emphasize exploration too, not just battling, which changed the gameplay completely. We put so many different features in: Gummi blocks you can use to build your own ship, blueprints, treasure, Gummi missions. You can explore it all thoroughly at your own pace. In the late stages of development, we had staff play the Gummi ship over for us a few times, and we did a survey to help us adjust the balance and improve the quality. There was someone who spent two weeks making various dog kennel Gummi ships (laughs). I teased them saying it was a waste of their creativity and artistic sense, so they spent the next week making various bird nests. I felt the strength of everyone's desire to make what they wanted, and the magic of the freedom of customization.

Q: Tell us how you decided on the plan to connect to the smartphone game KH Union Cross.

A: I wanted the scenes in the Keyblade Graveyard to be one exciting development after another, so I proposed a plan to borrow strength from KH Union Cross players and shoot a massive number of Keyblades at the Devil's Wave. Part of it was also that I wanted to create a huge command that surpassed the very limits of the system, as the culmination of the

situation commands that were so integral to KH3. But when the staff in charge decided on the system and the direction and actually made it, I was shocked. It was even more exciting than I had imagined. The battle director and I just put our heads in our hands. If we put something so flashy before the final world, then what on earth were we going to do for the finishing scene of final boss Master Xehanort? In the end we went with something completely different for Master Xehanort to contrast it. I hope you enjoy the difference.

Q: What would you like players to see in this game?

A: It's the big powerful features that tend to draw the eye, like Keyblade transformations and Attraction Flow. But the truth is, we have packed even tiny things with careful detail. For example: little conversations between characters, lucky emblems and ingredients hidden in unexpected spots, the way attack effects aren't simple explosions but actually change to fit the aesthetic of each world… I think if you pay attention to those kinds of things as you play, the game will be even more interesting.

Q: Were there any ideas that didn't work out?

A: In the Flantastic Seven mini game where you try to snap photos of the Orange Flan at the right time, there's a flan who makes a brilliant dive from a tree and splats onto the ground, transforming into a pancake. Actually, in our first plan, that flan was going to be a monjayaki (TN: a savory, pan-fried batter) rather than a pancake. But as we calmly reviewed the plan, we realized making the flan smoosh apart on the ground to turn into the monjayaki would cause a lot of issues, so we changed it into a delicious looking pancake topped with fruit. The flan is still a weird creature, but I think perhaps it is more charming turning into a dessert pancake.

Q: A message for the fans, please.

A: The theme of the KH series is "connections of the heart." During work on KHIII, I felt the strength that comes from connecting with all kinds of people - not just inside the game, but in real life. The warm support I have received from fans especially gives me energy, and I believe it's thanks to that that I was able to run at full strength from the beginning to the end of development. Thank you all from the bottom of my heart!

Secret of this title that only he knows:

To make Attraction Flows really feel like you're on a theme park ride, in the early stages of development we used a first person camera view. We had a few different people play it, and it was poorly received. So, we changed it to a camera looking down from above. However, actually, even now if you press R3 on the spinning cop, merry go round or splash mountain,

you can switch to first person view. If you want to experience it, please by all means check it out. But be careful of motion sickness…

Sign. (2019, April 26). *Kingdom Hearts 3 Ultimania - Yasue Interview Translated*. KHInsider. https://www.khinsider.com/news/Kingdom-Hearts-3-Ultimania-Yasue-Interview-Translated-15191. [Archived: https://web.archive.org/web/20250719193241/https://www.khinsider.com/news/Kingdom-Hearts-3-Ultimania-Yasue-Interview-Translated-15191].

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Scenario Mysteries Interview

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Translator: **goldpanner**

Kingdom Hearts III

Scenario Mysteries

—Is the speech Sora gives in the opening, the one that begins with "They can take your world, they can take your heart," a monologue by Sora post-ending?

Nomura: That's not the only answer, but the words do suggest Sora's mental state post-ending.

—In the Final World, Sora tells Namine, "Someone else special I know won't let you down." (*T/N: Literally, "the person you miss/want to see the most will come get you.") Did he mean Riku?

Nomura: He meant that the person Namine wants to see the most would come get her, as a way of cheering her up. It is actually Riku, in the form of the one who has been entrusted with the Riku Replica's feelings, who does go and get her. Namine does feel a special connection to Riku (the Riku Replica.)

—Sora doesn't thank Namine in this game, either. Is this something that is going to be carried over into a future game?

Nomura: Well, Namine's revival did happen at the end of the game, effectively making it something that will be drawn out longer.

—How did Ansem the Wise and Ienzo and the others move Namine's heart into a vessel without Kairi being there?

Nomura: When Kairi was defeated the first time in the Keyblade Graveyard, Namine's heart was thrown into the Final World, right? And Namine's heart was also thrown out just before the final battle, when Kairi was hit by Xehanort's attack. I do plan to show the details of what happened after that.

—In the Final World, there was a "Nameless Star" whose scene was voiced. Who is she, and who is she waiting for?

Nomura: I can't reveal that yet. But I can say that whoever she is waiting for, Sora knows their name.

—When we leave the Final World, we are back to the point just before Sora and his friends were defeated. Why is that?

Nomura: The power of awakening is essentially "the power to put sleeping hearts back the way they were." But the impact of forcing his friends' fading hearts back the way they were rewrote reality, and created a singularity. The rewrite caused the chronology in which they were destroyed to have "never happened."

—How did Roxas appear at the Keyblade Graveyard?

Nomura: At that point in time, Ienzo had basically finished making Roxas' body using the replica Vexen and Demyx brought as a base and the data from Twilight Town. This is also how Xion was manufactured using Sora's memories in KH Days. When he was at a state where all he needed was for the heart inside Sora to return, his friends were in peril. So he used his connection to Sora to rush to the Keyblade Graveyard, where his heart returned to his new body and his revival as Roxas was complete.

—When Marluxia is fading, he says, "I am on the cusp of reclaiming my identity, my purpose for being." Did he remember that he was from the distant past?

Nomura: Yes. I think if you play KH Union Cross to the end, you will learn his purpose for being.

—When Larxene said, "I was really just along for the ride," she must have meant with…

Nomura: Marluxia. It's not certain whether Larxene has her old memories, but she was interested in Marluxia to a degree for some reason, and became his partner in his plan to overthrow the old Organization XIII.

—Were Marluxia and Larxene also the Keyblade wielders of old that Xemnas was searching for?

Nomura: It hasn't been made clear yet, but I believe those who play KH Union Cross can guess. By the way, Xemnas was also looking for the Chamber of Awakening in KH Days because Ventus, who was sleeping there, was a Keyblade wielder of old.

—So that means Xehanort was aware that Ventus was a Keyblade wielder of old?

Nomura: Regarding that, I think I definitely have to show sometime how Ventus and Xehanort met.

—A question about Terranort. Ansem and Xemnas came from the splitting of Terranort. Does that mean that when they were defeated in KH1 and KH2, Terra was revived alongside Master Xehanort?

Nomura: By all rights, Terra should have been revived as himself at that point in time. However, his heart was still in the clutches of Xehanort, and it was unable to go back, and the shell of his body was the only thing that revived. Then, Xehanort brought the heart of Terranort from the past and put it in that shell of a body he once controlled.

—From when was Terra's heart inside the Guardian*?

(*T/N: They call the Guardian "the Monster Behind." I could be totally wrong, but I think this is a reference to what they call the balloon accessory version of him in the KHUX Ansem avatar board, which is in Japanese something like "Monster Balloon Behind the Ansem Costume.")

Nomura: Terra and Xehanort's hearts were eternally struggling against each other within Terranort. This process meant Terra's heart was caught constantly moving back and forth from its original position to the Guardian. By the way, the official name of the Guardian is "the guy behind him" (laughs).

—What happened to the Lingering Will after the battle?

Nomura: When Terra was revived it caused the Will to vanish, and the armor disappeared. But Keyblade Wielder's armour is like a Keyblade in that even if it disappears, it can be summoned again so long as the wearer is in their usual condition.

—At the end of KH3D, we saw that the New Organization XIII was missing a 13th member. Who filled that spot?

Nomura: Xion. The 12 members who were gathered in KH3D were missing the 13th, Xion, and reserve members Demyx and Vexen. That part may have felt a bit out of nowhere, and I am thinking of a way to follow-up on it.

—Did the members of the New Organization XIII have numbers?

Nomura: I did think of giving them numbers at first, but I didn't go with it in the end because it was too confusing having some members end up with different numbers than before. For example, I had gone with No.1 as Master Xehanort, No.2 as Ansem, and No.3 as Xemnas. But then I thought people would get confused like, wait, so the guy who was No.1 is now No.3?

—When Young Xehanort is fading away, he says, "Goodbye Sora. Your time in this world is..." What did he mean?

Nomura: "Your time in this world is over."* It's hinted at in the ending. Before that scene, he warned Sora, "There's a high price to pay for wielding such power foolishly." The power of awakening is not the power to bring people back to life, but Sora was using it to do just that

to his friends. As a result, time was rewound - and Young Xehanort predicted that Sora would pay the price by disappearing.

(*T/N: Literally, "You will fade/vanish from this world." The verb order is different in Japanese, it was the verb "fade/vanish" that got cut off when he died.)

—Was Lea insisting on being called Axel so that when Roxas came back he would recognize him?

Nomura: Yes, but also because when he saw Kairi as Xion, he remembered that there was someone he was supposed to remember, which made him feel that being called "Axel" was important.

—Why does Maleficent know about the black box from the days of old?

Nomura: After KH1, she travelled to the age of KH Union Cross. When she returned to the present after that, the result was her rebirth in KH2. The act of "returning to the present time/going to the future" is connected to how characters from the days of old have ended up in the current time period.

—It seems that Maleficent thinks that the Book of Prophecy is inside the black box...

Nomura: She does think that. It hasn't been shown exactly when she began to think that way, but I do plan to reveal it soon in KH Union Cross.

—In KH BbS, Master Xehanort's goal behind opening Kingdom Hearts was to "create a new world." But in this game, he says it is to "reset the world." Why the difference?

Nomura: What was revealed in this game was another piece of the truth: his goal was "this world is no longer any good, and we have to recreate it from scratch."

—We are interested in why Xehanort would come to such a conclusion.

Nomura: At first, I did want to use a next game to dig down into how Xehanort went from that simple boy playing the chess-like game to an admirer of the darkness. But, if I do that, then the Dark Seeker Chronicle wouldn't have ended with KH3 after all (laughs.) Some ideas had solidified to a degree, but it's shelved for now.

—During the underwater section in Scala ad Caelum, you can see a clock tower like the one that appears in KH Union Cross. Was Scala ad Caelum built upon the ruins of Daybreak Town?

Nomura: Yes. The staff who drew the concept art came to me with two proposals for the clock tower: one standing normally on the seabed, and one hanging upside-down from the surface of the sea. I chose the upside-down one.

—What was the true identity of No Heart, who appeared in KH BbS FM?

Nomura: That was also Master Xehanort. That was the armour he used to wear a long time ago, and in this game he was wearing his current armour.

—Who specifically are the "lost masters?"

Nomura: The seven (Master of Masters and six apprentices) who appear in KH X BC.

—When Luxord was fading away, he gave Sora a "Wild" card. What did that mean?

Nomura: That will come into play later. Perhaps Luxord's card holds the key to Sora's revival.

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THE 7 GUARDIANS OF LIGHT

Because their members changed partway, there were more than 7 people.

The group known as the "7 Guardians of Light" that fought the Real Organization XIII alongside Sora actually consisted of more than 7 people. This is because some members switched out partway through. Specifically, Terra and Roxas became members when Axel was injuried and Kairi was kidnapped (*Xion also acted as a stand-in for a little bit, but you can check the official list of members within the game's Character Files*).

- The members may have changed partway through, but it didn't change the fact that the x-blade was forged from "the clash between 7 lights and 13 darknesses."
- Members before the switch: Sora, Riku, The King, Aqua, Ventus, Axel (Lea) [*hurt by Xemnas's attack*], Kairi [*kidnapped by Xemnas*]
- Members after the switch: Sora, Riku, The King, Aqua, Ventus, Terra, Roxas [*Xion particupated for a little bit*]

THE 3 HEARTS THAT SLEPT WITHIN SORA

They have returned now that the war is over.

Regarding the identities of whom Ansem's Code referred to as the "3 hearts that slept within Sora," while the story identified both Roxas and Ventus, the identity of the third person was never clearly stated. However, based off what happened in the stories of [KH Days] and [KH 3D], it should be clear that the last person's heart was Xion's. Throughout this adventure, all 3 hearts end up returning to their own bodies, and order is restored within Sora's own heart.

- Xion's heart returns to her own body when Sora fights the Xion within the Real Organization XIII.

THE REAL ORGANIZATION XIII

Many of them had moved their hearts from the past.

Within the world of the [KH] series, it is possible to cast away your heart, using Xehanort's attempts to place his heart within various vessels as an example. The members of the Real Organization XIII who "shouldn't have hearts existing in this era" had all "cast their hearts from a point in the past" and shifted those hearts into replica bodies, so as to maintain their existences in the present day. As an aside, Dark Riku is the shifted "heart of the past Riku Replica," and not the shifted heart of the past Riku himself.

- In this game, the bodies of Ansem, Xemnas, and Young Xehanort were all replicas.

Breakdown of the hearts and bodies of the Real Organization XIII:

- **Master Xehanort**: Existed as himself (human). Presently extinguished (passed on).
- **Young Xehanort**: Existed as Young Xehanort's past heart in a replica. Presently extinguished (his heart has returned to the past).
- **Terra-Xehanort**: Existed as Terra-Xehanort's past heart in Terra's body. Presently, Terra's heart has returned to his body, restoring him (while Terra-Xehanort's heart has been extinguished).
- **Ansem**: Existed as Ansem's past heart in a replica. Presently extinguished.
- **Xemnas**. Existed as Xemnas's past heart in a replica. Presently extinguished.
- **Vanitas**: Existed as Vanitas's past heart in a replica. Presently extinguished.
- **Xigbar**. Existed as himself (a Nobody). Presently recompleted (?) after surviving.
- **Vexen** (benched): Existed as himself (a Nobody). Presently recompleted without having to suffer defeat.
- **Saïx**: Existed as himself (a Nobody). Presently recompleted after surviving.
- **Demyx** (benched): Existed as himself (a Nobody). Presently recompleted after surviving (?).
- **Luxord**: Existed as himself (a Nobody). Presently recompleted after surviving (?).
- **Marluxia**: Existed as himself (a Nobody). Presently recompleted after surviving (?).
- **Larxene**: Existed as herself (a Nobody). Presently recompleted after surviving (?).
- **Dark Riku**: Existed as Riku-Replica's past heart in a replica. Presently extinguished while leaving behind his replica vessel (said body was used as Naminé's vessel).
- **Xion**: Existed as "Xion's heart from when she first joined Organization XIII" in a replica. Presently, memory of her was restored after her future heart left Sora and switched sides to the Guardians of Light.

Special Case #1: Terra-Xehanort

Terra-Xehanort continued to exist by "shifting Terra-Xehanort's heart from the past, and placing it into Terra's heartless body." Originally, Terra-Xehanort had been in a constant state of Terra's heart and Xehanort's heart fighting for leadership, with Terra's heart bouncing back and forth between his body and the monster behind Terra-Xehanort. When Ansem and Xemnas were slain, Terra's body was recompleted alongside Xehanort and Terra's heart was placed back inside the "monster behind" while Xehanort made his body a vessel again.

- It's not as if "the monster is Terra's Heartless." Rather, it's just where his heart had been contained.

Special Case #2: Xion

At the time of [KH 3D], the Real Organization were missing one member. That opening was filled in with Xion. She existed by shifting the heart of "the Xion replica in the past," back when she held almost no memories of Roxas or Axel. However, because Xion held the ability to absorb Sora's and Roxas's powers, when Roxas cried out from within Sora, Xion's heart was absorbed out of Sora's heart allowing Xion's existence and memory to be restored.

- The voice that calls out Xion's name in this scene was Roxas within Sora.

THE ATONERS

Those from the original Organization XIII who all wanted to atone in their own ways.

Saïx

From the moment he was restored as a member of the Real Organization XIII, Saïx was planning on helping Axel and Roxas. When Vexen mentioned that "the whole thing was his idea," he was talking about Saïx, who had invited Vexen into the Organization after deeming his skills as the head of the replica research essential for Roxas's restoration.

Originally, Axel and Saïx shared the same goal, but then Axel made new friends in Roxas and Xion. Saïx was seemingly displeased with this, and ended up lashing out at Roxas because of his built-up irritation, which in turn caused a rift in his relationship with Axel. But deep down, he was envious of Axel getting a new friend, and so this time he decided to do things for Axel and his best friend Roxas.

- Saïx brings up that he was the one who taught Axel about the marks that used to be under his eyes (the upside-down tears).

Vexen

The reason Vexen gave for joining the Real Organization XIII was that he wanted to "advance his replica research," however the real reason was to "deliver a human-like vessel to Sora's group as atonement." While he initially advanced his research as Xehanort instructed him, once he learned that Ansem (Xehanort's Heartless) had nabbed Ansem the Wise, the gears of his true ambitions began to turn. And to fulfill his atonement, both the body of the replica and Ansem the Wise himself after being rescued were delivered to Ienzo in Radiant Garden.

- While a traitor himself, he proved how good an actor he was by questioning Luxord's own loyalty.

Ienzo

From the start of the story, Ienzo ends up forming an alliance with Sora in the course of his research as a human, and is the character we see walking down the path of atonement the

most clearly. He regrets that he let Xehanort trick him into betraying Ansem the Wise in the past, and to atone, he proves this through using the retrieved data of his former master to revive Roxas and Naminé.

THOSE WHO REVERSED THE "DEFEAT OF THE LIGHT"

The power of "bonds" from Naminé and others.

In the Keyblade Graveyard, Sora and the Guardians of Light were defeated by the darkness. However, when they redid the battle in their second attempt, the Lingering Will and the ancient Keyblade Wielders lent Sora their strength, allowing things to progress differently from the first attempt. This is because Naminé had "followed her connection with Terra" like she said she would in The Final World. And since the Lingering Will came running to help her, the end result was that the Guardians of Light were not defeated.

- Terra and Naminé had spoken in the past, and so Naminé used that connection to influence Terra's will.
- Because Sora didn't lose heart even when his friends were defeated, the ancient Keyblade wielders responded to his heart's resolve.

THE ANCIENT KEYBLADE-WIELDERS

Another key to the Keyblade War that Xehanort had been looking for.

In this game, Xemnas reveals that the four who were the original Organization XIII's No.9 to 12 were actually invited into the Organization due to an ancient Keyblade-wielder search. The reason behind this gathering was because Xehanort thought the ancient Keyblade-wielders would have secrets on the previous battle between light and dark: the Keyblade War. In fact, Marluxia and Larxene's connection to these olden days is depicted in "KH Union Cross."

- Ansem was looking for the girl in the experiments based on the assumption that she was an ancient Keyblade-wielder.
- Ventus appears in [KH Union Cross]. He is also an ancient Keyblade-wielder.

Members No.9 to 12 of the original Organization XIII

- No.9 Demyx (Name when a human: Currently unknown)
- No.10 Luxord (Name when a human: Currently unknown)
- No.11 Marluxia (Name when a human: Lauriam)
- No.12 Larxene (Name when a human: Elrena)

AWAKENING THE LOST MASTERS

Those who've transcended time and manifested from the age of fairy tales.

In the epilogue, Xigbar's true identity is revealed to be "Luxu, one of the Keyblade Masters from the age of fairy tales who's survived by switching names and bodies," and we get a scene of 4 of Luxu's foreteller brethen appearing. They are the ones known as the "Lost Masters" who disappeared ages ago. However, the only foreteller from [KHxBC] to not appear here was Ava. Xigbar says that Ava wasn't there because she "had her own mission, and she carried it out," but who knows if that's true. Also, will the foretellers' leader, The Master of Masters, be involved in the stories to come……?

- Maleficent & Pete are looking at Xigbar's black box from a distance. Their movements are concerning.

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Voice Actor Interview

Archive Author's Note: Non-interview content such as introductions, closing remarks, or unrelated images may have been omitted. This entry includes only the translated interview material.

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Translator: **goldpanner**

Miyu Irino (Sora, Vanitas)

Risa Uchida (Kairi, Xion)

Mamoru Miyano (Riku)

[I was able to overcome my desire as an actor, and perform with honesty]

—It's been 12 years since the three of you gathered for an interview last time in the KHIIFM+ Ultimania. If you count from the first KHI Ultimania, it's been 17 years.

Irino: It's nice to have a chance to see you again!

Uchida: I was 13 years old the first time. Now I'm more than double that age (laughs).

Miyano: The first time we were in our teens, the next time we were in our twenties, now we are in our thirties. This is the first time I've ever been involved for so long in a series.

Irino: It doesn't happen all that often, getting to do a role for so long.

Miyano: It's extremely rare to be able to do something for 20 years. Plus, since we have been doing it since we were teens, you truly see the changes in us through the games: the growth

of our bodies, our voices, and our hearts. The time we've spent being involved in the KH series has been hugely beneficial to us.

—Have you found that as you've played the same character for so long, your performance of them has changed?

Irino: Up until around KHII, I was about the same age as Sora, so I played him with basically my natural voice. But, I struggled with KH Re:coded. I listened to recordings of my voice from KHI over and over. I got tense, thinking, I've gotta reproduce that! At that time, it took a very long time for me to warm up my engine and "become" Sora. When I was in my early twenties, I got some experience acting on stage, and I developed my own sense of desire regarding what kind of drama I wanted to create. This made it hard to express Sora's naivete straight up. Sometimes, even when Mr Nomura (Tetsuya Nomura: Director) and Mr Shimizu (Yoji Shimizu: Voice Director) were directing me, I'd think, but wouldn't it be better like so...

Miyano: It became a struggle within your heart.

Irino: Yeah. It really sucked back then. I'd think, what am I gonna do, it's taking me so long to get into Sora, maybe I just can't do it anymore? But now I record without working myself up unnecessarily. My voice settled with age, and I can fall into Sora naturally just by thinking about who he is interacting with. Even if there is significant time between recordings, I can get my engine going right away.

Miyano: Mr Shimizu did say to me, "Miyu (Irino) has had a breakthrough. He can become Sora straight away."

Irino: I feel like, as I've continued to play Sora, I've become able to properly balance the vital "Sora-ness" with my own feelings.

Miyano: I've gone through something similar to Miyu. When I did KH1 in my teens, I didn't think hard enough about my performance compared to now. Actually, that let me avoid overthinking things: I was able to perform something right from myself, true to life. But by the time I did KH2 in my twenties, my sense of "self" as an actor had been formed—I knew what kind of performances I wanted to give—and I found myself unable to really become Riku. I did so many re-takes. Thanks to that experience, I was able to create my performance in KH3 by prioritizing "becoming Riku" over my own desires. Plus, I was able to make a link between Riku, who had overcome the darkness and was heading for the light, and myself, who had broken through the endless anxiety about my performance—I was able to express

my real emotions as Riku's feelings. I think I was able to give all the experience I've gained through the KH series back to this title.

—Ms Uchida, has your performance as Kairi changed in any way?

Uchida: In KH1, I really didn't put any thought into what I was doing, other than, I love this! It's so fun! (Laughs.) In KH2, I was a little more mature, and I felt pressured by the popularity of the series. I worried over whether I was really good enough for the job. My voice had also changed a little, so there were times when I was very conscious that I had to "become Kairi." But in KH3… happily, I felt, "I am Kairi."

Miyano: (In a deep voice) "I am… Kairi!" (Laughs)

Uchida: Exactly like that (laughs). Even when recording is done, Kairi is always in my heart. And, I think I've gained experience too—although maybe not as much as she has. I believe in that, stop myself from overthinking things, take just my script, and face straight ahead. This time, there were even more parts than usual where Kairi got to feel more human, which was fun. When she tells Axel, "Oh yeah. Very memorized," I first did it in a more serious tone, but I was directed to "make it sound like you're doing an impression of Axel." And that's the one they put in the game. I love that scene, it shows lots about Kairi, like her humanity and kindness.

Irino: Kairi can also fight now, too.

Uchida: Yeah! Ever since KH2, she has wanted to fight with everyone, and to be of use to everyone—and I feel the same. I am so happy that she got to fight in this game.

Miyano: Getting to have an old dream come true is so moving, it's like you're able to feel the history of it.

Irino: When we did the KH1 Ultimania, the 11th FF game had come out, and I remember saying I hoped the KH series would go on just as long. If you include all the side games, it's hit about that number.

—You also said, "If it goes on that long, we'll all be in our thirties."

Miyano: And now we really are! (Laughs)

Uchida: And back then, we were only really like "wouldn't it be nice if"… I am so thankful.

Miyano: It's amazing that we've been able to make so many titles. I think it only goes to show the strength of the feelings of fans of the KH series.

[I express the emotions I have the first time I read the script through Sora]

—In what order did you record the main story and each world?

Irino: We record starting from whichever parts of the script are finished. This does mean we are creating a performance without a grasp on how the whole story flows, but that's a lucky thing for me personally. Sora is the type to respond from his heart to whatever is right in front of him. Whenever he learns something for the first time, his feelings come right out of his mouth. When difficult topics come up that he's had explained to him before, he'll just ask, "what was it again?" (Laughs.) I don't know what's going to happen either until I receive the script, so I express the emotions I have the first time I read it through Sora. By the way, looked at storyboards during recording for this game, which was a first for me. Before all I had was the script, but with a storyboard I was able to imagine the scene and add my own fine-tuned ad libs.

—Did you know beforehand which worlds would appear?

Irino: No. In fact, I decided not to even ask. That way, I could look forward to the surprise (laughs).

—Irino, which world had you the most hyped?

Irino: Toy Story is a favorite of mine among Disney movies, so I was like, it's finally here! I was pretty excited to be able to talk to those characters and do battle in that world. I was also really happy that Sora turned into a toy in that world.

Miyano: How nice. You sure get some perks. You know what else I was jealous of? When you got to sing Under the Sea in Atlantica in KH2.

Uchida: Oh, I was jealous of that too!

Miyano: Although, even if Riku did go to that world I don't think he would sing Under the Sea… (laughs).

—Miyano, Uchida, which Disney worlds would you like to visit?

Uchida: Which wouldn't I like to visit!

Miyano: If we are talking KHI, Agrabah is number one for me. I love the world of Aladdin. Also, this might double up on what Miyu said, but I love Toy Story and would love to visit Toy Box.

Uchida: I can't go past Atlantica. where you can sing Under the Sea. But I also want to meet Elsa from Frozen!

Irino: Riku got to travel through different worlds in KH3D, so maybe Kairi will get to as well next time, right?

Miyano: I hope so! I wanna play a game like that so bad! I want to see Kairi change into different forms.

Uchida: I want to play that too!

Miyano: Maybe she wouldn't battle all that much, instead getting to do fun missions in worlds like Winnie the Pooh…

Uchida: What a peace-loving guy!

Miyano: Let's make a Kingdom Hearts party game starring Kairi! (Laughs).

Irino: It'd be nice for the three of us to travel the world's together, too.

Miyano: With Kairi front and center, and Sora and Riku following after her?

Uchida: Oh, they'd be so encouraging! It sounds fun.

Miyano: (To the development staff sitting in) May the three of us have a journey together? (Laughs.)

Uchida: I really do want to see that happen.

Irino: So far, our journeys have always involved someone looking for someone else. The three of us barely ever get to be together.

Miyano: I think perhaps the three of them getting to go on a journey together is the ultimate dream. They've wanted to do that since KHI, after all. They tried to leave Destiny Islands together on a raft, but all the way up until now it still hasn't come to be.

Uchida: If the three of them did go on a journey, I think Sora would be the one to decide where to go next, don't you?

Miyano: I will.

Irino: Yeah. I can see Sora saying, "I'm happy with whatever Riku decides!" It sounds like the journey would go well with Riku there. Sora, Donald and Goofy are always like, "Where do we go?" "I dunno." "Use your brain!" "Shut up!" and then end up going nowhere (laughs).

—Actually, the topic of wanting a game with Kairi as the protagonist came up in a previous group interview too. Uchida, you said, "Just thinking about being the protagonist gives me anxiety. I want them to make it, but they don't have to actually release it."

Uchida: Ahahahha! (Laughs.)

Irino: That's when you make it an indie game.

Uchida: Making it an indie game would be the biggest waste (laughs).

Miyano: That's exactly right! (Laughs) Why would you do that when Disney and Square Enix are making it!

Irino: Two big name companies get together to make an indie game? How extravagant!

Uchida: If we are going to make it then we may as well release it (laughs).

—By the way, do you play the games you're involved in once they release?

Irino: I play basically all of them.

Miyano: Me too, as best I can.

Uchida: …I suck at video games… In KH1 I couldn't get past Destiny Islands.

Irino: Oh yeah, I remember you saying something like that before!

Miyano: (Laying it on thick) Whaaat, you mean there are people who suck that bad out there?

Uchida: Yeah, and one is right here (laughs). Happily, I have a lot of friends who love the KH series, and they let me watch.

Miyano: I played KHI over and over. I always saved right before cutscenes so I could watch the ones where Riku appears whenever I liked.

Irino: I feel you there!

Miyano: I have so many save files (laughs).

Irino: I did the same thing! That reminds me, the other day I went and got a massage, and I ended up talking about video games with the masseuse. They said they loved KH2 so much that they couldn't bear to clear the game, it felt too final, so they just kept doing the Gummi ship for ages (laughs). I'm the type to do a completion run after clearing it once, so it was nice to remember that there are people out there who do things differently.

Miyano: I absolutely know how they feel! I still haven't cleared FFVII.

Irino: What, you haven't cleared FFVII!?

Miyano: Finishing it would be too sad. I couldn't put the final disc in.

Irino: The final disc? That's practically the end anyway!

Miyano: Yeah, there's just the final dungeon left. But when I realised it meant the game would be over, I couldn't do it. The worst part is that I made it that far but I haven't seen the ending (laughs).

["My friends are my power," which is linked to "Alone, I'm worthless."]

—One part of the story that had a massive impact was when Sora, having lost his friends at the Keyblade Graveyard, cries out with the fight gone out of him.

Irino: Yeah, that part hits hard.

Uchida: I agree…

Miyano: I got so sad seeing that.

Irino: When I read the script for that scene, it left a deep impression on me. Like, wow, even Sora can get like that sometimes… With everyone gone and their bonds broken, Sora is

powerless… In KHI, Sora has the line, "My friends are my power!" I felt like there was a proper link between that and the line in this game, "Alone, I'm worthless."

Miyano: Sora's been a shining light to everyone this whole time, right. To see that even someone like that would still undergo a massive shock if something so terrible were to happen to them, and to see his emotions exploding out of him, it was painful but it was also lovely, or I guess, it made me think, yeah, Sora is a normal guy after all.

Irino: From an acting perspective, it was pretty difficult to determine how far to go in showing Sora's feelings of loss. In the end, I stopped thinking and just performed exactly what I felt. My Sora engine was warmed up, and I had faith that what was coming out of me was what Sora was feeling. In KH3 we see many sides to Sora that have never been shown before. He shows weakness like in that scene, while at the same time he also exchanges comedy duo type jokes with Donald and the like. I discussed things with the sound director and staff constantly as we recorded.

—We also thought the scene where Riku and the Riku Replica talk on the beach at Destiny Islands had a lot of impact.

Miyano: I love that scene too. Riku understands the Riku Replica's personality. so when he tells him, "Take all the time you need," those words are full of warmth. Since he has been fighting his own darkness this entire time, he was often looking inward as he spoke. But this Riku is being positive, looking forward, and I felt like he was speaking proper "words of light." The reasons Riku fell to the darkness in the first place were things like yearning for and jealousy towards his friends, and the desire to protect those important to him… so it all began from the kinds of things everyone feels, right? It's hard for us humans to get rid of the darkness born in our hearts as we go on living our lives. But as we build experiences and grow, we take those things in and become able to face forward with positivity. Riku isn't fighting against the Riku Replica as a manifestation of darkness, he has melded with him as a part of himself, having made up his mind that even if he carries darkness he is a being of light. I think that is a personal strength of Riku's.

—The scene where Kairi tells Axel "don't hold back," a line Xion also said, hit especially hard for those who played KH Days.

Uchida: When I first found that line in the script, my heart wouldn't stop beating like crazy. When Kairi says that line, she isn't thinking of Xion at all, she means to say it innocently and cheerfully. But I just couldn't help but think of Xion… it was pretty difficult for me. But, I worked to say it "as Kairi."

—How do you differentiate Kairi and Xion when performing?

Uchida: Changing my tone isn't a skill I've managed to polish as a voice actress, so instead of doing that, I try to make it sound like they're different from inside. Even when saying the same line, Kairi and Xion have seen different worlds, and the meanings behind their words change. So, I pay attention to clearly differentiating how they express those things. This is just my, Risa Uchida's, personal image, but I have strong feelings of admiration and idealization for Kairi: she's the kind of girl I want to be. Xion is more relatable in many ways… although I'm not as noble as she is (laughs). So, in the sense of "becoming the character," I did feel Xion was easier to perform than Kairi.

—Speaking of Kairi, she and Sora sharing a paopu fruit before the final battle was another memorable scene.

Uchida: I love that scene a lot and I think it's so important, and at the same time, I thought, what a heavy scene…

Irino: We recorded two versions of that scene: one where she had him eat one, and one where she didn't. At the time we recorded, it hadn't been decided which way it would develop. It looks like in the end they went with her having him eat one. I'm sure Mr Nomura was unsure how far he should go in depicting their feelings for each other.

Miyano: I'm sure that's because it definitely is a delicate scene, one where Sora and Kairi's pure thoughts and feelings are made apparent. My heart leapt watching that exchange. Although they didn't confess to each other, if there wasn't love there then that scene wouldn't have felt as romantic as it did (laughs).

Irino: I don't think sharing a paopu is an official declaration of love though?

Miyano: Hey hey hey, I never got a lucky charm from Kairi or anything now did I…

Irino: The promise charm?

Uchida: Sorry! (Laughs)

Miyano: And in KHI you secretly tried to have the two of you leave the island without me, right?

Irino: Maybe it's Kairi who made Riku turn to the darkness. Seeing her so friendly with Sora probably made him feel lonely, right?

Uchida: …I see, so it was my fault, was it? (Laughs)

—What are you impressions of KH series director Mr Nomura?

Irino: We have worked together on recording in the same team for years and years, so he feels like family.

Uchida: Despite the fact that he's such an important person, he always speaks to us as equals: he's extremely kind. That time we were together at the KH orchestra held in Osaka, he was showing me pictures of his pet cats (laughs). He's always open-hearted without reserve.

Miyano: Working on KH is always warm and comfortable, and I think that's because Mr Nomura isn't just like that with the cast, he also takes good care of his staff. I think he's someone who loves deeply: once you've worked with him you're family. Also he has this quiet aura, but he is always cracking jokes. The other day he cut me off and said very seriously, "You know what, Miyano…" I was really nervous about what he was going to say, and then he finished with "... I have that T-shirt too." (Laughs) I told him we should wear them together.

Irino: After the talk show we did at Tokyo Sky Tree, I told him we should take a picture together, and we got a snap at the Keyblade Graveyard photo spot. I thought he might say no, but he went along with it for me.

Miyano: Aw, you guys are so close (laughs). You're like a real father and son.

Irino: Yeah (laughs). I wondered if perhaps Sora in KH3 is a projection of Mr Nomura himself. I'm sure he would deny that if you asked him, but I felt there was some of that.

—With this title, the 17 year old Dark Seeker Saga is over. How does it feel looking back?

Irino: It feels like a temporary end. I have the impression that I was able to get involved more deeply with KH3 than any other title so far. When the series began I was a kid, and all I did was show up and act. But this time I was brought to the orchestra recordings for the BGM, I visited the Osaka development team's office, I've done so much coverage: I was allowed to do so many different things. It feels very special. I'm allowed to be so deeply involved precisely because if how many years I've been doing this.

—It seems from the secret movie that the story isn't over yet.

Irino: I'm really looking forward to it. The gap between KH2 and KH3 was 13 years, I hope it's a lot shorter this time.

Miyano: I hope we can all hang out again soon.

Uchida: We did recording in our teens, the twenties, then thirties, so…

Miyano: Next time we'll be in our 40s? (Laughs)

Irino: Will I even be able to do Sora's voice? (Laughs) But, I do know veterans who are still performing the same voices after all these years, so I'll just have to do that too. Story-wise this game did mark a cutoff point, but the KH series is still showing developments. I want the

next game to be one that pushes forward into new territory, and let's you connect with all kinds of people in the world.

Miyano: "Connection" is the theme of KH after all.

Irino: I want to be able to make friends with characters from all kinds of new works.

—Lastly, please give a message for fans who are enjoying the KH series.

Miyano: I'm sure that those of you who have supported us from the start have been feeling nostalgic as you read our discussion. The fact that we have so much history is a huge source of pride to me as someone who has had this role for so long. When recording for the KH series, I walk in there filled with the happiness of being able to have your support, having followed one title for so long. And if this is your first experience with KH, I would be so happy if you were to play the series from KH1, so you can feel how we have grown, as well as develop a deeper love for the series as a whole. With your continued support, I am sure we will have the chance to meet again. Cheers!

Uchida: The fact that my beloved KH series has been able to continue for so long is of course thanks in part to the efforts of the creators and cast, but the biggest thanks must go to all the players. It may be presumptuous of me to say that, but I am truly full of gratitude towards those who have loved Kingdom Hearts. Thank you! I know you're curious about what's coming next, but first please enjoy KH3. I'm going to read the Ultimania along with you all and do my best to play (laughs).

Irino: The KH series, which has grown over the long months and years, is something that was made by all of us. Not just the creators, but the players too. From now on I want our passions to grow and grow, and bring even bigger dreams to life with the power of our connected hearts. Mr Nomura has all kinds of ideas, and I'm sure bringing them to life will be a big task for the people around him, but just like Sora I am waiting with excitement for whatever is coming next. For now, enjoy KH3 to the fullest, and then let's charge into the future together!

Sign. (2019, April 6). *Kingdom Hearts 3 Ultimania - Voice Actor Interview Translated*. KHInsider. https://www.khinsider.com/news/Kingdom-Hearts-3-Ultimania-Voice-Actor-Interview-Translated-15092. [Archived: https://web.archive.org/web/20250719194650/https://www.khinsider.com/news/Kingdom-Hearts-3-Ultimania-Voice-Actor-Interview-Translated-15092].

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Gallery Comments Part 2

Jump to Part 1 of the Gallery Comments

Archive Author's Note: Non-interview content such as introductions, closing remarks, or unrelated images may have been omitted. This entry includes only the translated interview material.
While not only part of the Kingdom Hearts III Ultimania, it is being added to this section (for now). Fixed the link pointing to Riku's corrected outfit of Chain of Memories. Original link would point to an error page; now points to the archived version.

—

Translator: **goldpanner**

Sea: This is my favorite thing I drew for KH2. That's why I've used it in so many places. It also comes with many memories, like how I went through hell coloring this picture due to technical difficulties. I had trouble thinking of a title, which is why it is so simple.

Sora: You might think he's grown up too much, but he's at an age where he grows fast. The lightening of his hair is due to Roxas' influence. Sora's characteristic hair side spikes are more vertical than before - did you notice? I made his clothes black, with form changes in mind. It was a lot of work drawing the gloves and wallet chain on his old outfit every time, so I got rid of them.

Roxas: I traced Sora for this piece. My image of Roxas actually came first, before Sora, and I had **already drawn him** for the first project document. The concept of "between" was something I kept in mind: since Sora's outfit was to be black this time, I made Roxas' base color white, and I also added a black and white checked pattern. The cross on his chest isn't a

necklace, it's part of his zipper, and it is the motif of the Nobodies. Also, his hair is supposed to be the exact same length as Sora's.

Heart: I didn't actually originally draw this as box art, I planned to do something with Kairi in her usual clothes. But this was well received, and it was close to the idea I had for the box art anyway, so we just went with this. I went back and forth over whether to set it at sunset, but since this picture was presented around the time of the re-launch I gave it a bright blue sky.

Invitation: This is the earliest thing I drew for a KH2 announcement, so it doesn't include the new characters yet. Due to the timing there were still many characters whose faces I couldn't show, which made it tough to draw. But, I didn't have time to spare, so I finished it with a few characters.

Awakening: This is something else I drew on a tight schedule. I wanted to try making a new picture that used all the elements we had at that point. I was relieved, the composition using old Sora and new Sora turned out a lot better than expected.

Duality: This is actually what I had intended to use for the box art. Not exactly as it is, of course… That's why it utilizes images of hearts. The concept was: Sora and Roxas, Kairi and Namine, and then contrasting characters on the right and left.

Sunset & Daylight: I hadn't drawn a PR pic that included Organization XIII, and that made me want to draw something with the full cast… and that was the beginning of my misfortunes… I didn't imagine it would become such a huge piece. But, when I look at the finished product, it does have impact, which is good. It was first revealed at the 2006 Tokyo Game Show, and lots of people gathered to look. I saw fans not moving away from the picture even when the event was closing, and that made me so happy. I was moved.

Exhilarating: This is based on the KH-esque open sky and open sea. The back of the box art features Sora and Riku from KH Re:COM - conceptually, this is the official art. They're doing a good job keeping balance on such tiny platforms, you may think, but that's because, well. Umm… It's deep, right? I'm sure.

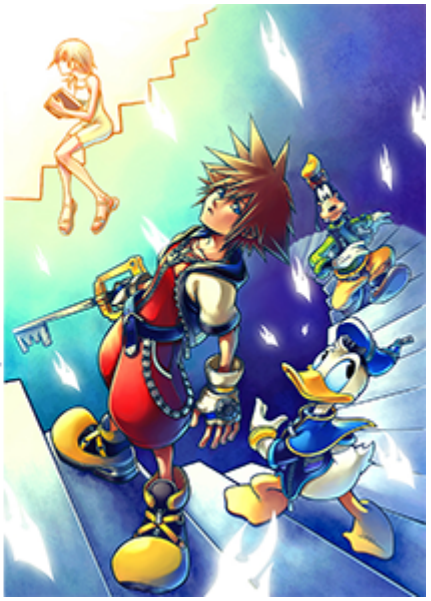
Late Summer: This never happens in the game, but I got a flash of inspiration and drew this picture in one sitting. I like the slightly sad atmosphere.

Crossroads (Morning Star): There's a folk story about a guitarist who makes a deal with the devil at a crossroads. That was actually the inspiration for the opening of KH CoM.

(Note: Nomura is referring to the legend of Robert Johnson.)

Crossroads (Dawn): I am really sorry. By the time I noticed, it was already too late. The color of Riku's clothes is wrong. It's been published like this, exposing my idiocy to everyone. Fans, please accept my apologies.

(Note: The back of Riku's shirt is supposed to be black. View the corrected version here.)



Deck: We were making a 3D video for an in-house presentation, and we storyboarded a part where Sora sits on his Keyblade and spreads out a deck of cards. That sequence was well received, so I made it into an illustration. It rarely happens in that order.

Card: Side Riku needed a title screen, so I made this in a hurry. I made it symmetrical to Sora's, so we could put them together for PR use.

Spiral: I planned to put a lot more into this drawing, but tragically I ran out of time. As such, I finished up a simple version. This is off topic, but although I am not the type to save my original illustrations carefully, I also never give them to people. However, once there was someone I really wanted to give something to as a show of gratitude, and the original drawing for this picture happened to be at hand. Now, it is off in a distant city over the ocean.

Boundary: I started drawing this as a key visual, but I fell in love with the way Roxas is standing here and finished it up to use for the box art too. It was difficult to balance - even though each character is in a different place, there are no distinct lines to separate them. However, by creating a triangle shape that flows from the right foreground to the left

background, I think I stabilized it. Each character is given a background that is meaningful to their story in the game - but the ground at Roxas' feet is white. He stands somewhere with no background. The concept behind this is to hint at the game's tagline: "What mattered the most was remembered the least."

Recollection: I came up with this picture while thinking of something for the ending. As such, it's constructed in a way that takes the double screens into account. I thought of several layouts to use in-game, and in the end we went with a resized version that doesn't show the full picture. I was very glad that I had the chance to use the original for the cover of the Ultimania. Roxas is taking off the Organization's trademark black coat, and the days he can never return to are vanishing, represented by the checked pattern associated with Roxas. The silhouette also looks like wings, which represents freedom.

Soar: The concept is that they are each beginning to move with their own purposes in mind. This is the instant that they leave their training, and fly from the nest into freedom. However, each of them have their own goals, destinations, and destinies - so they are all gazing in different directions, and their expressions are different. I usually like to use still images for key visuals, but this time I wanted to add a little movement.

Smile: I drew this because the PR team leader asked me to draw a key visual with a fun, bright tone like that of KH1. Of course, we have been releasing serious games recently, and it wouldn't fit for the box art or title screens to feature grinning illustrations - so my art had been getting more subdued. KH Re:coded is a more cheerful game, so a picture with everyone smiling is perfect.

PV Storyboards [1] [2] [3]: I usually don't draw storyboards for trailers, but as this was created at the very beginning of development and I had some time, I drew this. I drew this fully expecting a scene like this to appear in KH Coded.

Sea of Clouds: Since the composition of the first picture I drew, Distance, was too bold to use easily, I quickly drew this new piece. With ease of use in mind, I drew each of the three on separate layers and organized it so their positions could be adjusted. Even though I drew it in a rush, I like it. I think I managed to convey the tagline in a simple way: "Darkness becomes light, light falls into darkness."

Twilight: While drawing Sea of Clouds, I thought it was meaningful that it could be looked at upside down. So, I made another version just in case. The Japanese word “hakumei” can refer to the light of both sunrise and sunset, and since this is a picture where it could be either, I made that the title. It’s not a simple reversal of Sea of Clouds: is Riku falling to save Sora, or is Sora rising out of reach? It can be seen both ways. Sea of Clouds actually has the same meaning.

Entrance to the Dream: A key visual didn’t exist even after the title was announced, which made life difficult for the PR team, so I made this in a hurry to coincide with an event. This was around the time we decided on Sora and Riku’s new outfits, and the first Spirits that would be your partners. It had been a while since I’d drawn a KH picture, and I think you can tell that my mojo hadn’t quite come back.

Distance: When I draw KH art, I always keep in mind what kind of pictures they draw at Disney. But, I think this piece has the most bold composition so far. I like this picture because, along with the title, you can imagine all sorts of things. It was so bold that it was unusable as box art or for the title screen.

Promise: Sora at the water's edge, like I have always drawn for the numbered titles. Perhaps you noticed, but over the course of the three games he has gradually turned his back. He looks as though he might go running off, but in his hand he holds a paopu fruit: a promise to meet again. It hints at the story of the game.

Gathering: I wanted to draw this with the same sense of balance as Premonition, the box art from the first game. But, there were too many characters, and I had to give up. I purposefully drew them with no expressions, and instead made it so that you feel their expressions from the background.

Crown: I drew the original picture as a present for friends who had worked alongside me on the KH series for many years, and inside the frames I drew characters from other titles we had worked on together. After that, Sora from the middle was revealed when we cut him out to use for the KH 15th anniversary. This is a version I refined to use for KHIII. I increased the number of frames, thinking they could be used as needed. In the end, they were left blank - the final product is up to the viewer.

3: I drew the original picture for the 3rd anniversary of KHUX. That was when we revealed these three characters' KHIII outfits, which made me want to use it for the actual KHIII, so I rearranged it. I used a pattern from the KHIII main artwork for the background. I personally love Sora's face in this picture.

Jump to Part 1 of the Gallery Comments

Sign. (2019, September 4). *A Look Back: KINGDOM HEARTS Ultimania Gallery Comments Part 2.* KHInsider. https://www.khinsider.com/news/A-Look-Back-KINGDOM-HEARTS-Ultimania-Gallery-Comments-Part-2-15522. [Archived: https://web.archive.org/web/20250720125134/https://www.khinsider.com/news/A-Look-Back-KINGDOM-HEARTS-Ultimania-Gallery-Comments-Part-2-15522].

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-World of Tres- Interview: Nomura & Shimomura

Archive Author's Note: Non-interview content such as introductions, closing remarks, or unrelated images may have been omitted. This entry includes only the translated interview material.
Not part of the Kingdom Hearts III Ultimania but added because of its link to Kingdom Hearts III. Original notes have been added as footnotes as per convention; the notes about the PA system and "Kawamori-kun" where not referred to in the interview directly, possibly due to an oversight, and are now correctly implemented. The interviewers were part of the notes and are now at the top of the interview.

—

Director & Composer Interview

Tetsuya Nomura & Yoko Shimomura

February 19, 2019

Interviewers: Tomoko Kanemaki/Taketeru Sunamori

All the logos were matched to the season

– When were the plans for this concert finalized?

Nomura: Plans were pretty much finalized by the time of the KINGDOM HEARTS Orchestra -World Tour- took place.

Shimomura: I actually have a question for you, Tetsu-san. Why is the logo for this concert pink?

Nomura: Because it's Spring. All the logos are matched to the season. The logo for KINGDOM HEARTS Concert -First Breath- was blue because it was Summer, World Tour was Spring, so it was a verdure color.

Shimomura: Interesting!

–With regard to song selection, who primarily held the reins?

Shimomura: The selections were made based on Tetsu-san's vision of how it should go blended in with my own vision of how it should go.

Nomura: The basic blocks were decided by me. The general structure I came up with was, Part 1 would be all the songs from the titles preceding KINGDOM HEARTS III (KH III hereafter), and Part 2 would exclusively feature songs from KH III.

Shimomura: I initially wanted to do every field and battle theme in KH III, but I surmised that alone would fill up an entire concert program. But thanks to Tetsu-san's suggestion, we devised a way to pack everything into Part 2, by arranging a lot of medleys and such. As a result, a massive number of songs was squeezed into the program, leading arrangers and performers to weep (laughs).

Nomura: I understand the appeal of a concert solely for KH III, but I had a feeling that the fans wanted to hear other songs as well. That was the reasoning behind this structure. In Part 1, the audience will experience the story that leads up to KH III, and then during the brief rest, they can ponder and reminisce about the story in preparation for KH III.

Shimomura: Experience the whole story one more time.

Nomura: Exactly. Part 1 can be considered a long prologue.

I wonder how the medleys will turn out

–With all the music being performed by an orchestra, is there anything in particular that you're looking forward to?

Shimomura: The songs I wonder about the most when they're to be played by an orchestra are the songs from KINGDOM HEARTS coded (coded hereafter).

Nomura: Not KH III?

Shimomura: The music in KH III is mostly well-suited for an orchestra, so I'm not concerned. coded, on the hand, is not well-suited for an orchestra at all, so I'm very curious about how it will play. In that same vein, I think Baymax played by an orchestra will be very interesting.

Nomura: I wonder how the medleys will turn out, because there are so many songs. But I do also believe it would be better to offer songs and arrangements that the audience can only hear at this event. I mean, if they wanted to hear whole individual pieces, they would listen to the soundtracks.

Shimomura: The total number of songs that will be performed is 77!

Nomura: Aren't you the one who put in that many songs? (laughs) I just divided the blocks (laughs).

Shimomura: Indeed (laughs). KINGDOM HEARTS 3D (3D hereafter) was actually not supposed to be a medley. We were planning to only do Dream Eaters, but we just kept adding other songs. So, that leaves coded, Utada-san's song, and Dearly Beloved. Everything else is a medley.

Nomura: Dearly Beloved is the song I asked a retake for during the composition phase, right? When I heard that first version, it wasn't Dearly Beloved at all. I remember thinking to myself, "What is this strange song?" (laughs)

Shimomura: Ohh! That was the incomplete version of Dearly Beloved. That was a completely different arrangement.

Nomura: So different that its original form was completely lost!

Shimomura: Well, the intro was the same… I did have a strong feeling you wouldn't accept that version, but I took a gamble and asked you to take a listen. Of course, the only feedback I received was "What is this!?" (laughs)

Nomura: It was almost a completely different song! (laughs)

Shimomura: So, eventually we settled down into this current version.

–Any other memorable songs from KH III?

Nomura: When Shimomura's songs do pass inspection, they all tend to pass with flying colors. So that just begs the question, "Why can't you always do that from the beginning?" (laughs)

Shimomura: I keep telling you, that's because my god said…

Nomura: Uh, no, I don't think so (laughs).

Shimomura: (In Kansai dialect) My god told me I can't make good songs!

Nomura: What's with the sudden Kansai-speak? (laughs) See, the thing about Shimomura is, she's a slow starter. In the first half of the schedule, she has tons of retakes, but then in the second half, she writes these amazing songs and they pass without any retakes.

Shimomura: Oh, you mean the production schedule.

Nomura: What I'm saying is, your first half songs mostly become retakes, while your second half songs are exceptional. That's always how it is, so every time it happens, I say to myself, "Why, oh why can't she do this from the beginning?" (laughs)

Shimomura: That reminds me, for Rapunzel, you said, "The song isn't bad, but there's no reason for it to be about Rapunzel."

Nomura: Isn't that a great point?

Shimomura: Huh!? I don't know about that… Anyway, I told you that the harp in the piece symbolized Rapunzel's flowing golden locks, and later I just intensified the harp sound. What ended up happening was, the harpist had a really difficult recording session (laughs).

Nomura: The songs I ask you to retake always end up becoming memorable classics, so isn't it all good in the end? (laughs)

Shimomura: Yes, I try to think of it that way. I wrote two boss themes as well, and you said one was too "heavy," so you asked me to "brighten it up a little," remember?

What's important is that it's KH-ish

–You are using 3 composers this time. Are there any distinct differences between them?

Nomura: I think this time around, I asked Ishimoto-san for the most retakes. I think he had a pretty difficult time.

Shimomura: In what sense?

Nomura: Of late, I had mostly been asking him to take care of FINAL FANTASY-related titles, and I felt that a lot of his compositions were leaning too much in that direction. It's perfectly understandable, but still, I remember requesting multiple retakes for Pirates of the Carribean.

Shimomura: Pirates of the Carribean is a really cool song.

Nomura: It became a cool song because he toiled and persevered through difficult times. Sekito-san, on the other hand, seemed to breeze through the process.

Shimomura: Wow!

Nomura: ...Wait, maybe there was one song. But really, almost no retakes. The only real issue I remember was in the first song he made–I think it was a Gummi Ship song. It just wasn't KH-ish, so I asked him to rewrite it several times.

–So, it's important for songs to be "KH-ish"

Nomura: Yes, KH-ish… I admit, how to interpret that "ish" is really hard to explain in words (laughs). Put simply, it has to fit the KH world view.

Shimomura: I still don't fully get it (laughs). But when I was listening to Tetsu-san's talk, I was reminded of the time we were working on KH II. KH III is a numerical title, so I didn't want to do the same kind of things we did in BbS or 3D; I wanted to get closer to the things we did in KH and KH II, But yes, I agree that it's difficult to explain "KH-ish" in words, although cheerful battle music has always been a series hallmark.

–Did the different hardware have any effect on the final product? It is my understanding that KH III has been released for PlayStation 4 and Xbox One.

Nomura: The quality of the visual and aural expressions we are able to put forth has been vastly improved.

Shimomura: Up until KH II, we were using internal sound sources[11]. We started using streaming technology[12] from BbS, and this time around, the big difference was that we used many songs performed by a live orchestra. Up until now, only several of the instruments in a piece were recorded with live sound, or just the song Dearly Beloved, or just the ending. This time, even the field music was performed by a live orchestra.

Nomura: Another thing that was different this time was our dealings with Disney. This time around, many people who were involved in the making the actual films were still active members of their respective titles' teams, because there are now always possibilities for sequels. What resulted were more varied and in-depth talks regarding the music and the actual game content.

–Did you attend the live orchestra recording sessions, Nomura-san?

Nomura: Only once.

Shimomura: For Dearly Beloved, Face my Fears, and Don't Think Twice. We've asked Tetsu-san to attend recording sessions since KH I.

Nomura: But really, as a layman, there's no way for me to get deeply involved in the process, so I just mostly watched from the guest seats. I did, however, say one thing to Kaoru Wada when I first went to greet him…

Shimomura: I just knew of this one moment, Tetsu-san was going to say something, and sure enough, he didn't disappoint. Wada-san's solution was that he would "fix it during mixing," if I recall.

Nomura: There was one part where the sound was so small, I was a little puzzled about how it was going to be performed at the concert.

Shimomura: There will be a PA system[13] at the concert.

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[11] *Internal sound source: Most game consoles have an internal instrument (synthesizer) built in that creates sound signals. This is what is called an internal sound source. Consoles that were released after PlayStation continued to have this feature built in.*

[12] *Streaming technology: A playback method using pre-recorded sound data, much like a CD. It carries advantages such as not having to consider issues like polyphony, allowing for near unlimited freedom in playback. On the other hand, the hardware specs required to use the technology are very high, thus it took a long time for the game world to adopt it.*

[13] *PA system: The sound of a live orchestra is limited in range (the maximum is said to be a 2000-seat venue). Therefore, concerts in large venues such as the Tokyo International Forum, which boasts 4000+ seats, require a PA (Public Address) system.*

Nomura: Just to make that one part louder?

Shimomura: It's what we've always done. Ideally, I would like to do a concert without a PA system, but it would be impossible at the Tokyo International Forum; the venue is just too large.

The battle songs are the cornerstones

–Are there any songs in KH III that you are particularly fond of?

Nomura: I think it's the battle songs that most effectively reignites memories. I think they all generally have a good feel.

Shimomura: The battle songs are the cornerstones.

Nomura: I think maybe this time, it's Roxas' battle song.

Shimomura: The arranger did a fantastic job of transforming into an orchestral piece. I think another one would be the song for the Ansem, Xemnas, Young Xehanort consecutive battle. That was originally my song, but when I heard the new arrangement, I thought it was so cool that I texted, "My nose started bleeding!" to (Keiji) Kawamori-kun[14]. I can't believe that used to be my song. Oh, there's something that I remember vividly. 2 songs that I did for KH II, Vim and Vigor and The Encounter; I remember Tetsu-san praised me so much when I put out the demo!

Nomura: I don't remember this.

Shimomura: These songs are used in other series installments.

Nomura: Sorry, my hard drive is small, so a lot gets overwritten.

Shimomura: I almost never receive praise from Tetsu-san, so I remember it just like it was yesterday.

Nomura: One characteristic of the songs in KH is, all the titles are in English, so they're hard to memorize (laughs). Why don't you just name them something like I was Praised 1 and I was Praised 2?

Shimomura: If I did that, sooner or later I would have to use the title I Was So Very Rejected 4 (laughs).

–What was the first song you wrote this time?

Shimomura: This time, I think I started with Hercules, and Monsters, Inc. was somewhere near the end. I'm not given a set order to follow, so I just look at them all and start writing for the one that I first get an idea about. I guess I have it easy that way.

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[14] *Kawamori-kun: Keiji Kawamori, A sound manipulator at SQUARE ENIX.*

–Conversely, what was the last song you wrote?

Shimomura: The epilogue and the secret. Also, maybe the last recording with a fairly large orchestra was Dearly Beloved and the end credits. As for the secret, I aimed for it to be last minute for a variety of reasons.

Nomura: When I first heard it, I was like, "Oh!" But then I listened to it again carefully, and began to get it. There sure seems to be a lot of talk surrounding it recently.

–Finally, a message to all the fans and supporters attending the concert.

Nomura: This is just one of those things where you have to see and hear the results for yourself. Concerts require an inordinate amount of preparation. The same could be said for game development I suppose, but one thing to keep in mind is that the work isn't merely represented in what you see and hear; it's in the editing process of the visuals, it's in the hours spent deciding the program structure. Every time we plan a concert, I think to myself, "This is the last one!" I hope that everyone in attendance has a great time.

Shimomura: Just like how a game that took years to make can played to the end in a few dozen hours, we've spent a massive amount of time planning this event and packing all the content into 2 hours.

Nomura: With that in mind, please enjoy the show!

– Are you going to make an appearance this time?

Nomura: I'm giving it some serious thought. Maybe I should make an appearance just to do a survey. I can ask people in the audience to raise their hands and such (laughs).

Shimomura: KH fans are all very kindhearted.

Nomura: Just like me, right? (laughs)

Shimomura: ...What? (laughs)

Sign. (2019, September 27). *KINGDOM HEARTS III -World of Tres- Interview: Nomura & Shimomura.* KHInsider. https://www.khinsider.com/news/KINGDOM-HEARTS-III-World-of-Tres-Interview-Nomura-Shimomura-15860. [Archived: https://web.archive.org/web/20250720133937/https://www.khinsider.com/news/KINGDOM-HEARTS-III-World-of-Tres-Interview-Nomura-Shimomura-15860].

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Post Kingdom Hearts III Interviews

The following sections and interviews are not part of any Ultimania, because the last released Ultimania was the Kingdom Hearts III Ultimania (as per 2025, July 20).

Kingdom Hearts III Re Mind Interviews

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Famitsu Interview with Tetsuya Nomura

Archive Author's Note: Non-interview content such as introductions, closing remarks, or unrelated images may have been omitted. This entry includes only the translated interview material.

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—KINGDOM HEARTS III Re:MIND, which was announced prior to SQUARE ENIX LIVE E3 2019, received great responses. What is the meaning behind this title?

Nomura: I often receive notifications from the PR staff that say "reminder". It means "reconfirm", but it also means I am being reminded to respond to them (laughs). The meaning of what I just mentioned and the double-meaning are the same. It means "remind", "reconfirmation", "reclaim the heart*", and so forth.

(*Note: 心 means "heart" and also "mind", and 再生 can mean "regeneration", so 心の再生 can also mean "regeneration" or "rebirth" of the "mind". Also, "Reclaim Your Heart" is a phrase used on the back of the box for Verum Rex in Toy Box)

—In the logo, between "Re" and "MIND" there is an unfamiliar mark.

Nomura: I think the meaning changes whether you connect or disconnect between them. In the past I have often used "Re", but I wanted to cut the background with a more meaningful symbol, and when I decided to convey something with one symbol, I thought that the musical symbols "vide*" and "coda*" were appropriate. Based on those meanings, I hope you all will think about it in various ways.

(Note: "vide" denotes a skipped part of a musical piece, and "coda" is a concluding musical section that is distinct from the main piece. A coda is typically represented as a circle with two intersecting lines. It also means "something that serves to round out, conclude, or summarize")

—Riku, Aqua and Roxas being playable was a nice surprise. Are those scenes from the "Limit Cut [Episode]" where you can fight against the most powerful enemies?

Nomura: Actually, they're not. This video mainly consists of elements included in the additional scenario, rather than Limit Cut itself. Sora's Oathkeeper Keyblade and the new form shown at the end of the video are free DLC and will be simultaneously released with the paid DLC.

—Oh, so the additional scenario is where they're playable?

Nomura: Similar to how you'd play as Riku and Aqua in the main story, there will be stages in the additional scenario where you can select which character you'd like to use.

—They seem to resemble battles that took place near the end of the main story...

Nomura: Yes, they certainly do (laughs). The additional scenarios are independent, so you will be able to enjoy this content after clearing the main story.

—Then the scenes with the Master of Masters and Young Xehanort, as well as that of Luxord and Xigbar, must also be from the additional scenario.

Nomura: That's right. The conversation between Luxord and Xigbar will take place at the beginning of the additional scenario. We're referring to it as an "additional scenario" because there are quite a lot of cutscenes. The scenario was rewritten twice and it grew substantially by the final draft. The sheer volume exceeded our expectations.

—By the way, about Demyx...

Nomura: Well, he's coming (wry smile).

—That's a relief (laughs). I'm very glad we're getting Limit Cut.

Nomura: I can't disclose much about the Limit Cut bosses, but we're aiming for the same number as last time (KH2 Final Mix).

—Wow, that many!?

Nomura: Definitely more than expected. Besides the additional scenario and Limit Cut Episode with bosses, the Secret Episode has a boss as well, so the volume of DLC should be sufficient.

—The release is slated for this winter, but will it be by the end of this year or during the next?

Nomura: I can't say for sure since we need to resubmit it to CERO for rating, but I'd like to release it as soon as possible to avoid FF7 Remake.

Sign. (2019, June 20). *Famitsu interviews Nomura on Kingdom Hearts 3 Re:Mind DLC.* KHInsider. https://www.khinsider.com/news/Famitsu-interviews-Nomura-on-Kingdom-Hearts-3-Re-Mind-DLC-15449. [Archived: https://web.archive.org/web/20250720150959/https://www.khinsider.com/news/Famitsu-interviews-Nomura-on-Kingdom-Hearts-3-Re-Mind-DLC-15449].

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Tai Yasue in Twitter Q&A

Archive Author's Note: Non-interview content such as introductions, closing remarks, or unrelated images may have been omitted. This entry includes only the translated interview material.

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Translator: Goldpanner

Q1 What's new in the Version 1.07 (Free Update) You can get the Oathkeeper and Oblivion Keyblades. They have form changes:

Oathkeeper has Light Form and Oblivion has Dark Form, and there's dedicated combo action. Not only that, but both Keyblades can be used to dual-wield by form changing into Double Form. We have also added 6 normal combo action abilities, fixed some of the cutscenes in the main game, and unlocked a lot of parts of the game that were previously locked from sharing.

Q2 Why did you focus on adding to photo mode i.e. Data Greeting and Slideshow?

The gameplay videos fans were uploading after release were really interesting and cool, and it moved us. So, we wanted to add something to the DLC that would get everyone even more fired up. In Data Greeting, you can select characters and then give them poses and add effects and such and take pictures. Then you can choose images and music to add to a Slideshow, and easily create your own personalized videos. After we made the feature, all the members of the development staff tested it with a photo competition. All the pictures were things you'd never see in the actual game, from heartwarming ones to ones that made us go, um, should this even be allowed? I really think everyone will have a lot of fun with it.

Q3 Tell us how to best enjoy the Premium Menu. Also, why did you add the Fastpass Code and the Black Code, which will make things harder for yourself?

The Premium Menu is a feature that lets you customize the game in various ways from the pause menu. Right after starting a new game, you can select either the Fastpass Code or the Black Code. The Fastpass Code includes settings like auto guard, and is aimed at people who want to move through the game quickly. The Black Code has settings like HP Slip (where your HP slowly decreases over time) and is aimed at people who want to enjoy a harder challenge. Both Codes have their own dedicated Achievements, and you can play with various settings as you aim to get Achievements. Some of them are curveballs - one of the Fastpass Code Achievements is to make it from Rapunzel's Tower to Corona while touching the ground as little as possible.

Q4 The members of the New Organization XIII appear as Limit Cut Bosses, but are they different from the ones in the main game? Who is the hardest boss?

They are completely different. We have changed their AI as well as their moves. They're all strong or fun in their own ways - you might need to be good at blocking, or attacking, or reading moves - which means different people will find different ones hard, but I think Xion and Master Xehanort are especially hard compared to the rest. They are so nerve-wracking and so satisfying to beat that your hands will still be shaking 15 minutes after you beat them.

Q5 Nomura requested a secret boss so hard it'd make people cry - did you succeed?

We got testers and developers who had defeated past KINGDOM HEARTS secret bosses to do a survey, and received the opinion that it was indeed hard enough to make them cry. It has a particularly high number of attack patterns - this secret boss will take time to develop a strategy against. But, just like with the New Organization XIII members, there is a way to strategize against the character's movements - it's not impossibly hard, and in fact if you play perfectly you can win without taking a single hit.

Q6 What else has been added in Re Mind?

Re Mind is an additional scenario that complements the end of the main story and allows you to have fun with new co-ordinated action while playing as Kairi, Roxas, Riku and Aqua. You can swap between English and Japanese voices, and the "w/ Orchestral Concert Ver." edition has a mode that lets you enjoy recordings of the Kingdom Hearts orchestra.

Q7 Lastly, a message for the fans.

This DLC expands on everything - battle, story, gameplay - allowing you to enjoy KH3 on an even deeper level. For those who are looking forward to the story and playing as the new characters there's Re Mind, for those who like being creative there is Data Greeting and Slideshow, for those who want challenging battle there is the New Organization XIII Limit Cut, for those who want to experience gorgeous music and visuals there is the Orchestra recordings (※w/ Orchestral Concert Ver." edition only) - we have prepared a wide range of content to suit all sorts of tastes, so please play it and see!

Co Director Tai Yasue

Joey. (2020, January 21). *Tai Yasue talks about Kingdom Hearts III Re Mind in Twitter Q&A*. KHInsider. https://www.khinsider.com/news/Tai-Yasue-talks-about-Kingdom-Hearts-Re-Mind-in-Twitter-Q-A-16450. [Archived: https://web.archive.org/web/20250720151308/https://www.khinsider.com/news/Tai-Yasue-talks-about-Kingdom-Hearts-Re-Mind-in-Twitter-Q-A-16450].

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Nomura in Twitter Q&A

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Translator: **goldpanner**

※*This Q&A contains spoilers for Kingdom Hearts III. Take care if you have not finished the game.*

Q1 How does Re Mind differ from the Final Mixes released for previous numbered titles?

We released Final Mixes to adjust the balance of and add things to the entire game. Re Mind is independent content you can enjoy after beating the main game. That said, we did also add English voices to the Japanese version, limit cut bosses, and other things you'll find familiar from Final Mixes. So, other than the fact that the main game hasn't been changed much, you can basically think of this as the equivalent of a Final Mix.

Q2 How did you decide what to put in the free update and what to put in Re Mind (paid update)?

KH3 and Re Mind are to be thought of as separate content. It is split up like this: the version update is basically for what you bought as KH3, and Re Mind is for new features outside the main game. But, as I just said, the English voices and other features that would previously have been included in a separate package as a Final Mix have been included in Re Mind. But then I also included some new content that would usually have been in a Final Mix, like Keyblades and new abilities, in the free update - with the aim of giving you something for after finishing the game.

Q3 So there won't be a KH3 Final Mix? What about a physical release of this?

There are no concrete plans right now. We might think about something when a new console releases, but I'm not thinking about whether that something will be a Final Mix.

Q4 When is the new story in Re Mind set? And what can we expect to see in it?

Chronologically it jumps around a bit, but most of your time as Sora is set between the end of the last battle and the final cutscene, depicting the blank space of Kairi's rescue. As a player, you view the story from a higher vantage point than Sora - and in Re Mind, Sora is following the story from a different vantage point to the main game. It's hard to explain, but KH3 concludes with itself, and its ending connects to the ending of Re Mind.

Q5 Does it influence or rework anything in the main KH3 game?

The story of KH3 itself hasn't changed. You play it after finishing KH3, so it doesn't influence anything. But, we did update a few places in version 1.07 - things we gave up on at the time due to various circumstances that we wanted to make do justice to our original vision. To give concrete examples, it's stuff like damage-taking expressions in cutscene and the way the sky looks in the background.

Q6 Why didn't any Final Fantasy characters appear in the main game this time? Why did you add them back in?

The story developments of KH3 didn't provide a reason to stop by Radiant Garden, plus work related issues. They appear in Re Mind because story developments make them needed, and because of the passionate wishes of you fans. So, even though they don't have a big role, they now have a sense of presence in the world of KH3.

Q7 What are the highlights of the limit cut bosses? Who do you want us to pay attention to in particular?

We had decided to use the New Organization XIII for the limit cut bosses, but as the project progressed we began to feel conflicted over whether or not to leave Xion in there. Development was already underway when I went to discuss it with Yasue, like, maybe we really should cut her? Knowing this, I hope you feel just as conflicted as you fight her. She's super strong.

Q8 Early on you said you wanted to add the equivalent of one world - did that change?

Actually, we did start designing and planning a new world, but the reasoning why just this world would be added in after being separate didn't sit well with me. In the end I decided that it would be better to work it in properly from the start next time there's a chance. All the new content added with Re Mind put together makes more than one world's worth of content. In particular, it was a lot of work making this many bosses.

Q9 What can you say about the secret boss & episode?

The secrets contain my thoughts about the future of the series, but with the information out at present I don't think you'll be able to guess any of it. Some parts of the battle ended up very different from what I requested. But it surprised me in a good way, so take it as it is.

Q10 Why did lines from KH1 appear in the final trailer?

Those were lines I'd long wanted to put together if I ever got the chance. You may not understand, but the inclusion of those lines is what got the world of Kingdom Hearts approved. There is no mystery to solve this time, they stand at the doorway.

Q11 Are there any plans for further updates or DLC?

There are no plans for a hypothetical update as of now, but if issues come up we will deal with it. Re Mind is to be the first and only DLC. We are already working on the next title. The title screen of Re Mind serves as a piece of foundation for it.

Q12 Will you tell us about any plans for future KH projects?

We still need some time with regards to main line Kingdom Hearts, but first up the KH UX team will have a surprising announcement tomorrow. Aside from the KH3 and KH UX teams, we actually have two new teams in operation, and from them one title will be coming surprisingly soon.

Q13 Finally, a message for fans.

We had some organizational changes after finishing KH3, and I'm very sorry this took so much longer than expected. The elements added in Re Mind are ideas we came up with that we thought you would enjoy. My attention always ends up turning to the plot no matter what, but most of our development time was spent working on new battle and gameplay elements. I hope you enjoy the merciless battles only possible via DLC. Also, we have unlocked nearly the entire game for sharing via the KH3 share function. Yasue said he really wanted to see everyone trying the secret battle, so we unlocked as much as possible. Please first try beating these formidable opponents. In just a few more hours, at midnight on the 23rd (JST), Re Mind will be playable. Thank you for all your support.

Director Tetsuya Nomura

Sign. (2020, January 22). *Nomura discusses Kingdom Hearts 3 Re Mind, new teams and future projects in Twitter Q&A*. KHInsider. https://www.khinsider.com/news/Nomura-discusses-Kingdom-Hearts-3-Re-Mind-new-teams-and-future-projects-in-Twitter-Q-A-16466. [Archived: https://web.archive.org/web/20250720151508/https://www.khinsider.com/news/Nomura-discusses-Kingdom-Hearts-3-Re-Mind-new-teams-and-future-projects-in-Twitter-Q-A-16466].

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PS Blog: Square Enix interviews Nomura

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2019 was a really big year for you! Looking back on Kingdom Hearts III, what part of that game are you most proud of?

Nomura: Everything, as I couldn't put anything out there that I couldn't stand behind with confidence. I did all that I could given all the different conditions that could arise during development.

Out of all the plotlines that are resolved in Kingdom Hearts III, which was the most meaningful to you?

Nomura: A lot of things come to mind, but maybe Xigbar, because we spent a long time getting him to where he is.

The fans really seemed to enjoy the updated character designs in Kingdom Hearts III. Which of them are you most happy about?

Nomura: For each of them, I would feel satisfied once I finished drawing, but after a bit of time, I would end up thinking about what I would like to do differently next time.

Back in April of 2019, you released the Critical Mode update, which added this higher difficulty mode to the game. Have you played Critical Mode yourself, and do you have any tips?

Nomura: With my ability, not at all. Judging by the videos that have been uploaded online, I think the players' gameplay would offer more insight than I can provide.

Are there any important details in Kingdom Hearts III which you haven't seen fans pick up on yet?

Nomura: If I were to say something like "the true identity of so-and-so," for example, that would spoil the surprise for people later on. So, I can't say anything specific, but sometimes I do see interpretations that make me think they could be overthinking things.

With the Re Mind DLC launching tomorrow, what are you most excited for players to experience there?

Nomura: I'm always amazed by the KH fans' interpretations, and I'm looking forward to how they analyze things this time as well.

Finally, we have to ask… Which Keyblade would you personally like to wield yourself?

Nomura: Master Xehanort's Keyblade.

Sign. (2020, January 22). *PS Blog: Square Enix interviews Nomura on Kingdom Hearts 3*. KHInsider. https://www.khinsider.com/news/PS-Blog-Square-Enix-interviews-Nomura-on-Kingdom-Hearts-3-16475. [Archived: https://web.archive.org/web/20250720151741/https://www.khinsider.com/news/PS-Blog-Square-Enix-interviews-Nomura-on-Kingdom-Hearts-3-16475].

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Dengeki Playstation Interview with Nomura

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Translator: **Dandelion**

-Let's talk about the Kingdom Hearts series. In January Kingdom Hearts III's DLC chapter was released, but the focal point was the additional scenario in "Re: Mind" which expanded on and supplemented the events of the final battle.

Nomura: There was a lot of feedback from people who played KHIII. We created scenes to make some of those events easier to understand, as well as Sora's journey post-game that gave a perspective you wouldn't have otherwise had.

-13 bosses appeared in the Limit Cut episode. It seems perfect for those who want to sink their teeth into challenging battles.

Nomura: Creating the new scenes was easy enough, but the most time-consuming aspect of production on the Re:Mind DLC was building the new battles, like the Limit Cut bosses. Each of the 13 data battles is a totally different fight from their main game counterpart, so be sure to give it a try!

-In the Secret Episode, the mysterious Yozora appeared. Initially, I thought Yozora was just a surprise reference that appeared as a cameo in the Toy Box world, but apparently it seems like he's a much more important character that'll be tied to the future of KH.

Nomura: You wouldn't be the first to think so, right now there's a lot of speculation about that because of the clear resemblance to what was shown of "VERSUS." However, the two are actually very different and I think where Yozora's story will lead will be unexpected. So, why did "VERUM REX" appear in KHIII? None of this makes sense, but I hope to clear it all up as soon as possible.

-Along with the release of Re Mind, "Dark Road" was announced…

Nomura: KH Dark Road is a new service developed by the KH Union Cross (X) team in a double-feature operation. KHUX itself will continue, but Dark Road will shed light on Xehanort's past, so please pay attention to both. We talked about this in the 7 Lights and 13 Darknesses Q&A but aside from the fact that Dark Road is a new project by the KHUX team, there are 2 other projects being worked on by other teams and one of them will be coming pretty soon, so please wait just a little a longer.
Follow Kingdom Hearts Insider on Facebook and Twitter for the latest updates on *Kingdom Hearts Union χ [Cross], Kingdom Hearts 3* and all things *Kingdom Hearts*!

Arielle. (2020, March 28). *Nomura discusses KH3 ReMind, Dark Road, future developments in final issue of Dengeki Playstation.* KHInsider. https://www.khinsider.com/news/Nomura-discusses-KH3-ReMind-Dark-Road-and-future-developments-in-final-issue-of-Dengeki-Playstation-16777. [Archived: https://web.archive.org/web/20250720152026/https://www.khinsider.com/news/Nomura-discusses-KH3-ReMind-Dark-Road-and-future-developments-in-final-issue-of-Dengeki-Playstation-16777].

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Kingdom Hearts Melody of Memories Interviews

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Game Informer Interview with Hazama, Suzui, and Nomura

Archive Author's Note: Non-interview content such as introductions, closing remarks, or unrelated images may have been omitted. This entry includes only the translated interview material.
The original list links to Arielle's (2020, September 7) post on KHInsider, however, as it did not include the full interview, the original interview is being included, while both sources are linked at the end.

—

Music has always been an integral part of Kingdom Hearts. Iconic songs like "Dearly Beloved" have become core to the series' identity, alongside poignant character themes for Kairi, Ventus, and Xion. Between acclaimed composer Yoko Shimomura's masterful work adding emotion to every situation and Utada Hikaru's vocals breathing life into "Simple and Clean" and "My Sanctuary," the melodies have captivated audiences, becoming core to the experience. With rhythm game Kingdom Hearts Melody of Memory, the rich aural library is finally getting top billing, and we interviewed producer Ichiro Hazama, co-director Masanobu Suzui, and iconic franchise director Testuya Nomura about what to expect. Here are their answers to our biggest questions.

Can you discuss the creative process and how the team approached bringing Kingdom Hearts to a new genre?

Hazama: The idea was floating around for a while, it was around five years ago. [Suzui and I] kept thinking, "Oh, we would love to do a Theatrhythm Kingdom Hearts." We were discussing it, making planning documents, and things like that. But at the time, we decided that it might be a bit difficult to move forward with the project. A few years ago, there was a separate discussion with Nomura-san and Disney. Disney actually came forward to Nomura-san, asking, "Hey, could you do this with us?" They decided that they wanted to move forward with the project and then the discussion came down to me and Suzui-san to do this project, and that's how this project came to be.

It does look very similar to Theatrhythm's gameplay, and Square Enix had entries for Final Fantasy and Dragon Quest in that series. Why is Melody of Memory a separate spinoff rather than a new Theatrhythm game?

Suzui: As we mentioned earlier, we were talking about how we had come up with rough ideas and planning documents. But as we were discussing how we go about creating this particular title with Nomura-san, we were keen on making this 3D. With Final Fantasy Theatrhythm, you may recall we had this side-scrolling, very 2D sort of aesthetics. And then in terms of Dragon Quest, it was more of a top view where your battles are sort of going inward; there's like this field of depth. With Kingdom Hearts, we wanted to pursue the idea of utilizing the original characters. We wanted to recreate the original look of the game titles and carry that over. We also took inspiration from [Kingdom Hearts'] 15th anniversary music site.

From there, we started to think, "Okay, so how do we incorporate different elements?" And Nomura-san provided feedback and a lot of the inspiration that went into the basic idea. We took that as well as some of the technical elements and the mechanics that were already existing in the Theatrhythm titles, and then thought about what kind of music and what kind of scheme of the notes that we want for players to experience. We [wanted to] incorporate those fun elements of play and make sure that we are leveraging the game mechanics of the original game, as well as bringing in Kingdom Hearts' stylish action and incorporating the rich story behind it, especially the world settings that we've established in our series titles. We asked, "How do we leverage and keep the integrity of that?" That was our foundation for our approach.

From there, we thought, 'Okay, so we're going to build this from the ground up and we're going to bring this as a brand new title.' That's why we decided we're going to change up the name and we weren't going to carry over the Theatrhythm title. We thought it would be appropriate and proper to have that Kingdom Hearts name. That's how we moved along with the development of it. We all had the same understanding amongst our team members that this is not a Theatrhythm game. Nomura-san also [felt] that way, so he came up with a really nice name for this title and a really nice key art as well, and we kind of expanded from there.

Will we see lots of remixes to songs, or are you mostly sticking to the originals?

Suzui: Generally speaking, we will be using the original music. We didn't want to take away from the gameplay experience from the different titles in our franchise. But that being said, certain parts of the game, like the title menu or the staff credits, will have songs that incorporate a new arrangement by Miss Shimomura, so that's something to look forward to.

Are there any new tracks in the game that we haven't heard before?

Suzui: No. There will not be any new tracks.

With over 140 songs in the game, can we expect music from every world we visited in the Kingdom Hearts series, or are some being left out?

Suzui: We actually looked at all of the tracks that were available and we revisited all the different CDs from the past and counted all the songs. Of course, we couldn't keep a full catalogue of the most recent Kingdom Hearts games like 2.8 or some of the songs in Kingdom Hearts III. We haven't gotten the full count of all of the songs that are in there, but it ended up being about 600 to 700 songs. So unfortunately, there may be some songs that are not included in Melody of Memory. That being said, from our vast library, we tried to carefully select the songs, and it's a very rich selection of over 140 songs.

How do they approach designing the different levels and making sure the backdrops match the essence of each song?

Suzui: The primary game mode that you will be playing through is what we call “World Trip.” You're literally going through [the experience] in order from Kingdom Hearts 1 and following it with the game's story. You’re looking back at the experience through the music and the gameplay, and there are various movie clips of the story that you get to experience through it. In some parts, there's some narration by Kairi, and then once you clear a few songs and different missions, you open up a gate to move on to the next section. As you progress through the game, of course, there will be different difficulties with the songs. You may notice that the enemies that appear in these stages will be from the original games, and we tried to structure it so that you're re-experiencing the different iconic moments and symbolic elements with each of the songs. Also, the enemies that you encounter will move very similarly to how they first appeared in the original titles. You experience the overall game arc as you progress through these different songs.

With the narrative, it’s what we call the “Dark Seeker Saga,” which has been throughout all the Kingdom Hearts titles up to Kingdom Hearts III. We traverse through all of the different key elements through that saga in order. That's the general flow. And then with the tempo and the mood of each of the stages, we have some boss battles prepared as well. Those do tend to be a little bit more on the difficult side. So there's a good variation of difficulty levels as you play through. Now that being said, we understand that there may be players who might not be as comfortable with playing rhythm action games, and so we made sure to design the game so that players are able to complete their missions no matter what difficulty they choose.

Kingdom Hearts is an action/RPG. What kind of progression system will we see in Melody of Memory in terms of new abilities and leveling up?

Suzui: The progression system for Melody of Memory is leveling. Because it's a rhythm action game, it was a bit difficult to differentiate the different moves and actions within the gameplay. But through leveling, your character will gain higher HP, so you won't get a "game over" as easily, which should be beneficial when you're trying to clear the different stages. Plus, as you level, your attack power will also increase. Of course, bosses will need a few extra hits. But as you level up and become stronger, you won't take as long to stun them to get an advantage on attacking the bosses, and you'll get a bonus for that. There is no ability system that you would be bolstering throughout the process. Each leader will have two different types of ranged and melee attacks, but that's about it.

How will online battles work in the game?

Suzui: Similarly to Theatrhythm Curtain Call, there is a versus match, but we expanded on that where you have one player versus one player and you compete for the higher score, and as you win, your rating will go up. With online battles, one of the mechanics is called "tricks," where you're trying to not exactly sabotage, but get in the way of the other players so that they might trip. The goal is to get as many points without failing or tripping in your gameplay and competing for who gets the better scores.

We discussed this a little bit with Kairi's narration, but what can we expect from the story and Kairi's involvement in it?

Nomura: So Kairi is going to be our storyteller so to speak – what she is doing is reflecting upon the previous iteration and the history of the narrative. She is going to be talking about all of what happens within Kingdom Hearts and she's going to be bringing you through this story. And so her positioning... I'm afraid we can't delve too far into details, because it will be quite a bit of a spoiler and she is relevant to a very big part of the plot. But what she does tell through her recollection is not just the experiences that she went through, but it's all the experiences that her allies and the party members had experienced throughout the story as well. And once we go through the story of recollection and beyond that, we start to see a timeline that will connect to the future.

Is this going to bring closure to where we left off with Kairi at the end of Kingdom Hearts III and the Re Mind DLC?

Nomura: With Melody of Memory, the timeline fits immediately after the story of Re Mind. But with that being said, the story volume is not going to be as large as a mainline Kingdom Hearts title, so you may not see too big of a movement in Kairi's time and in her narrative. Still, I think you might get a glimpse of where this might be going through this title. It's quite difficult to not spoil it, but still try to explain it at the same time. But with Kairi, her childhood is still shrouded in mystery. We haven't really delved deep into that part of her narrative, so you might be able to see a glimpse of that through Melody of Memory. But that being said, again, it's not meant to advance things significantly through this game.

The Gummi Ship was featured in trailers. How is that going to work in the game?

Suzui: It's kind of unfortunate this is going to be the last question because the Gummi Ship is just strictly going to be for transportation purposes, traveling between worlds. [laughs] Unfortunately, we won't have any sort of like customization elements or anything like that.

Wallace, K. (2020, September 7). *Kingdom Hearts Melody of Memory Preview - Our Biggest Kingdom Hearts Melody Of Memory Questions Answered*. Game Informer. https://gameinformer.com/preview/2020/09/07/our-biggest-kingdom-hearts-melody-of-memory-questions-answered. [Archived: https://web.archive.org/web/20250720210025/https://gameinformer.com/preview/2020/09/07/our-biggest-kingdom-hearts-melody-of-memory-questions-answered].

Arielle. (2020, September 7). *GameInformer interviews Hazama, Suzui, and Nomura about Melody of Memory.* KHInsider. https://www.khinsider.com/news/GameInformer-interviews-Hazama-Suzui-and-Nomura-about-Melody-of-Memory-17529. [Archived: https://web.archive.org/web/20250720210010/https://www.khinsider.com/news/GameInformer-interviews-Hazama-Suzui-and-Nomura-about-Melody-of-Memory-17529].

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PlayStation Blog Japan Interview with Hazama, Nomura & Suzui

Archive Author's Note: Non-interview content such as introductions, closing remarks, or unrelated images may have been omitted. This entry includes only the translated interview material.

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Translator: **Antifa Lockhart**

Key points of the interview:

- Hazama and Suzui have been wanted to do a *KINGDOM HEARTS* rhythm game for many years, and have pitched it to Nomura several times over the years.
- Nomura felt there was a noticeable divide between *KINGDOM HEARTS 3* and the rest of the series, and wanted to use a new rhythm game as a sort of omnibus of the best moments of the series.
- *Melody of Memory* was developed as an action game as well as a rhythm game with the original staff supervising and animating the characters so that it played like a KINGDOM HEARTS game even though it was a totally different genre.
- Disney characters are unlocked on the field by hitting special items, and they join your party as a guest for a limited time. It's possible to unlock King Mickey this way.
- The difficulty levels in this game are more suited to different playstyles with the amount of work the player has to do coordinating their own input with the buttons.
- There are over 140 songs; the team wanted to choose evenly from the games but since *KH3* was being developed around the same time, the amount of songs from *KH3* are less.
- Nomura didn't want this game to add nothing to the series, so a new short scenario was written for *Melody of Memory*.
- Nomura is aware that some people believe the hooded figure in the trailer to be the Master of Masters because the game and the character share the same acronym, which was what he wanted.
- He doesn't confirm if that's the case, but he does admit he worried that people would think *Melody of Memory* and *KINGDOM HEARTS Chain of Memories* would be connected. He made "Memory" singular to try to avoid that connection.
- Game development is in its final stages
- Nomura hopes to continue to appeal to a broader audience because of the success of *KH3*. People who skipped games can feel caught up as Kairi narrates the story so far in *Melody of Memory*.

Arielle. (2020, September 8). *PlayStation Blog Japan speaks with Hazama, Nomura & Suzui about the development of KHMOM.* KHInsider. https://www.khinsider.com/news/PlayStation-Blog-Japan-speaks-with-Hazama-Nomura-and-Suzui-about-the-development-of-Melody-of-Memory-17535. [Archived: https://web.archive.org/web/20250720210240/https://www.khinsider.com/news/PlayStation-Blog-Japan-speaks-with-Hazama-Nomura-and-Suzui-about-the-development-of-Melody-of-Memory-17535].

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Famitsu Interview

Archive Author's Note: Non-interview content such as introductions, closing remarks, or unrelated images may have been omitted. This entry includes only the translated interview material.

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Translator: **Antifa Lockhart**

Key points:

- The *Theatrythm* team has wanted a *KINGDOM HEARTS* game for some time and proposals began about five years ago.
- Special attention has been paid to make this game feel like an extension of the rest of the series, from character animation to the sound of the cursor.
- Though this game doesn't use the stylized chibi designs, they do make cameo appearances in the menus and have been rigged so they have fluid wiggles and wobbles.
- You can tell from the key art that Kairi is considered the main character of this story, though Nomura was working on it right up until the deadline.
- Originally, Chirithy was going to be the narrator but Nomura decided Kairi was more appropriate, and when he asked his team to make new cutscenes for this game they were surprised but did it anyway.
- There are no secret episodes or movies, everyone gets the same content regardless.
- To keep up with the theme of *KINGDOM HEARTS* as an action series, the gameplay broke from the tradition of side-scrolling and took on the same appearance as the 15th anniversary memorial music box. Still, special consideration had to be paid to avoid players from feeling motion sickness.
- There are over 140 songs, and choosing them was difficult. Suzui used the concerts' setlists as a guide for popularity then made edits based on what was appropriate for the story.
- There are 47 normal worlds, 16 of which are "Kingdom Hearts" worlds, and 31 of which are Disney worlds. In addition to that, there are about 33 boss arenas.
- If you follow the story and play through the world trips to get to the end quickly, it should still take about 10 hours.
- COVID-19 made some things difficult, mostly being able to record overseas but they were able to make it work.

- Nomura is keeping in mind that 2022 is the 20th anniversary of the *KINGDOM HEARTS* series.
- The team's been working on the next project and he can't say when new announcements are coming but they'll be amazing.
- There are no plans to add new songs or any DLC, the team wants this to be a definitive omnibus for the series.

Arielle. (2020, September 8). *Famitsu: KHMOM interview reveals no plans for DLC, no secret ending & more.* KHInsider. https://www.khinsider.com/news/Famitsu-KHMOM-interview-reveals-no-plans-for-DLC-no-secret-ending-more-17549. [Archived: https://web.archive.org/web/20250720210411/https://www.khinsider.com/news/Famitsu-KHMOM-interview-reveals-no-plans-for-DLC-no-secret-ending-more-17549].

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Gamekult Interview with Hazama, Nomura & Suzui

Archive Author's Note: Non-interview content such as introductions, closing remarks, or unrelated images may have been omitted. This entry includes only the translated interview material.

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Translators: **Gamekult**

Summary:

Melody of Memory is built with Unity, which indiezero used for Theatrhythm Final Fantasy All-Star Carnival.

There are 20+ playable characters in the game, which account for the four main teams and Disney characters. There are no costume changes available and the characters will retain the same appearance they had during their respective adventures to reflect these past versions of themselves.

There are close to 800 collectible cards depicting various illustrations and characters.

Boss stages are limited and only appear at critical points in progression. Boss themes are not exclusive to these stages; some are used in Field Battle, for example.

Songs can be unlocked by progressing through the game, and once obtained, they will be available in other modes at any time. A few are only available through Item Synthesis, but it will be easy for players to access the entire playlist.

You cannot build your own team; the trios are all preset.

In PVP, players can use 10 different kinds of tricks against their opponent, such as HP Change, Trick Drain, Stealth Enemy, Phantom Enemy, Hide Guide, Hide Enemy, etc. These cannot be countered, but the more proficient you become with the game, the faster you'll be able to fill your own gauge and retaliate. Near the end of the song, you'll be able to use two tricks at once to further sabotage your opponent.

There are no new worlds in Melody of Memory.

When asked if the new story elements are playable, Nomura says "not really."

Sign. (2020, September 14). *Gamekult interviews Hazama, Nomura & Suzui about KH Melody of Memory.* KHInsider. https://www.khinsider.com/news/Gamekult-interviews-Hazama-Nomura-Suzui-about-KH-Melody-of-Memory-17644. [Archived: https://web.archive.org/web/20250720210841/https://www.khinsider.com/news/Gamekult-interviews-Hazama-Nomura-Suzui-about-KH-Melody-of-Memory-17644].

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Famitsu interview with Melody of Memory staff

Archive Author's Note: Non-interview content such as introductions, closing remarks, or unrelated images may have been omitted. This entry includes only the translated interview material.

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Translator: **goldpanner**

"Kingdom Heartsy visuals and story"

--Hazama and Suzui, with you having worked on the Theatrhythm Final Fantasy and Theatrhythm Dragon Quest rhythm action games, we're sure the concept of a Theatrhythm Kingdom Hearts had crossed your mind. Did you go with the Kingdom Hearts Melody of Memories title because the content felt more suited to the main KH Series?

Hazama: Actually, when we put together the proposal doc about five years ago, the working title for the project was Theatrhythm Kingdom Hearts.

--So the concept has been in the works for a while.

Hazama: I wouldn't go so far as to say that. I just thought it would be cool if we could make one for Kingdom Hearts. But, Tetsu (Tetsuya Nomura) proposed something "more Kingdom Heartsy".

--What does "Kingdom Heartsy" mean in specific terms?

Hazama: It means instead of a new installment in the Theatrhythm series, we do a title with Kingdom Hearts series visuals and story. Plus, to give some more specific details, the in-game sound effects are one example; the KH series sound team made them for us. The character animations and models were also created using assets from KH -HD 1.5 Remix- although in the end the KH team made us brand new animations. Even the effects were approved by the OG creators. The in-game times were decided by Tetsu. With so much collaboration from the original team members, this game is Kingdom Heartsy in all the most important ways.

Suzui: The cursor sound effects are another example. I know you'll hear them and immediately get into that Kingdom Hearts mood.

Hazama: All this to say, a staggering amount of people were involved in this game (laughs).

--By the way, Theatrhythm features cute chibi characters. Will this title feature Kingdom Hearts chibis too?

Suzui: Not in the actual game, but the load screens do feature some chibi shenanigans, kind of like as mascots. Although you know what, even just that meant we needed to rig the models with bones and create animations (laughs).

In early plans the game was going to be from Chirithy's POV!?

--I'll be asking about the content of the game soon, but first I want to know about this title's story. The box art has already been revealed. The composition seems to imply that Kairi will be the protagonist and the game will be from her perspective. Is that right?

Nomura: That's right. This story is about Kairi as narrator reflecting on the past, which is why I drew that picture. Sora appears in three of the framed pictures: those are the final scenes of KH1, KH2 and KH3 from Kairi's POV.

--Wow, really!

Nomura: You know what though, of everything we faced building up to the master, this art put us in the most peril (laughs).

Suzui: That art will be in the title screen, but he didn't finish it until right before the deadline. At about 7PM that day we showed Nomura what the title screen looked like with the art, got his opinions on it, then called the office and got them to make edits, then showed Nomura the edited version again… and it took two more round of this before we were done. We cut it so close to the line we were basically cutting the line (laughs).

--So it was that difficult?

Nomura: This artwork is meant to form a pair with the KH3 art of Sora sitting in the chair. But, in Sora's picture, the frames behind him didn't contain any pictures, right?

--Now that you mention it, no.

Nomura: When I came up with the idea for this artwork, I knew drawing so many characters was going to be very difficult to get done on schedule, but I steeled myself and decided to do it anyway.

--This story is about reflecting on the past, but we have seen a couple of new scenes.

Nomura: Yes. But, there are only a few. The plot of KH3 was finished with KH3 Remind, so the amount of sequel style content is limited. In the earliest plans, the narrator was going to be Chirithy, not Kairi. But, as I wrote the plot I began to feel that Kairi made a much more fitting narrator, which also meant I had to add a bit of plot. In the beginning we also weren't planning to use outright cutscenes for the flashback scenes, but I suddenly made up my mind that we should. Everyone else was like "what!?" though (laughs).

Suzui: We didn't have anyone on the team who could make Kingdom Hearts cutscenes, So when Nomura was like, "Let's make new cutscenes," we were stuck like, "Okay but we don't have anyone who can… what do we do," (laughs). But, Nomura called on the Kingdom Hearts team, and the OG staff made them for us. Not only did our worries evaporate, it also made it a better game, so we are very thankful.

Nomura: This game doesn't have a secret movie or anything like that; the main story is all there is. As to the content: I'd like you to play it and see for yourself.

The "Memorial Music Box" was a hint

--One easy way to tell the difference between this and the Theatrhythm series is that this game isn't a side-scroller, it has 3D graphics that move forwards into the screen. How much trial and error did it take before you settled on this POV?

Suzui: When we first talked to Nomura about making a Kingdom Hearts rhythm action game, he told us that he preferred we find a way to enjoy rhythm action with the Kingdom Heartsy 3D visuals. Right around that time, we got a request to try making rhythm action style memorial music box visuals for the Kingdom Hearts series 15th anniversary site. From there, it led to the current gameplay where Sora, Donald and Goofy run and destroying enemies to the rhythm via Kingdom Hearts controls

--So, the fundamental screen orientation was easy to decide on.

Suzui: Well, everything was uphill from there. When we tried out the controls, we discovered they gave people motion sickness very easily.

Hazama: We ourselves don't get motion sickness, so it was very difficult to adjust. We would think we had fixed it for sure, and it would still affect people who get sick. So, we'd adjust the camera angle a little more… There was a lot of trial and error in that vein.

--In the end, how did you make it so that people won't get motion sickness?

Suzui: It was a collection of things, such as the timing and speed of the camera turning back-to-front, the height, how much characters moved up and down, how much the course itself wound around, and how the camera followed it. We changed these things and were able to solve the problem. Kingdom Hearts has to be dynamic and cool, but a rhythm action game is too difficult to play if your line of sight moves around too much. We worked hard to fine-tune things until we pinpointed how to make it both easy to play and difficult to get motion sickness.

Nomura: Adjusting things to stop motion sickness took the longest. But, when we had finished, the game screen looked pretty simple and desolate. So, from there we added effects,

raised the degree of difficulty a little, and adjusted the controls… and at every step we made sure to check how fun it was to play, and I had them fix anything that concerned me.

--By the way, how difficult it is from a development perspective to make a rhythm action game?

Suzui: Well, I don't think it's easy (laughs). It's impossible to play if you can't see the targets, and sometimes there will be multiple inputs within the same second, so the most important thing is adjusting the timing of the inputs. Plus, people who aim for high scores will be looking for something that focuses on the gameplay, while casual players are here to appreciate something with flashy visuals; but go too flashy and it will be too hard to see the targets. We had to aim for a balance between ease of play and flashy visuals.

On top of that, we also had an issue with optimization. Rhythm action games need to move with utter smoothness, otherwise they are difficult to play and don't feel good to control. So, first we were creating our ideal visuals, and then testing to see if we could keep the look while lightening the processing. But, as soon as we thought we'd found a balance, then the staff working on the sheet music would add in a bunch more enemies and raise the load. As soon as we thought we'd lightened it enough to put the enemies in, then Nomura would come in wanting even flashier effects (laughs). It took a lot of changes before we could finish it.

--This game included over 140 music tracks. Was the music remixed in any way, or did you use the original music as it is?

Suzui: We thought that the most important thing was that the music would bring back memories of previous games, so yes, just like with Theatrhythm, we mainly used the original music.

--How did you choose the tracks?

Suzui: All the music is so popular, so we looked at the concert setlists for reference, but also sometimes there were tracks where actually a track with a different title but with the same base music was more popular. So that's how we would choose. Also, we selected a few tracks that were necessary for structure, as we have created world trips that allow you to experience the story.

--The full series has a massive amount of music. Even just checking them all would have been a huge job, right?

Suzui: As our starting point we made a list from all the CDs that have been released so far, and then refined it from there. Although I just said we used the original music from each title,

the musical arrangements that play at the title screen and staff credits were created for this game by Shimomura (KH series main composer Yoko Shimomura).

--What did Shimomura say about this game?

Hazama: Apparently she really enjoys playing the Theatrhythm series, and she has asked us many times over the years if we would make a Kingdom Hearts one. I am sure she is looking forward to this game, and I think we have made something that will satisfy her.

Suzui: Once I met Shimomura at a cherry blossom viewing picnic, and she gave me the full set of Kingdom hearts series CDs. She gave me this "you know what to do now, right?" smile (laughs), so I am sure she's been hoping for us to make a Kingdom Hearts series rhythm game for a long time.

The same gameplay feel as the KH series

--Now, please give us a simple run-down of this game's gameplay.

Suzui: In the basic "normal style," you use three buttons to attack. When there is one target, any button will do. When there are two targets, you need to press two buttons at the same time, and when there are three, you need to press three at the same time. If you hold the jump button you can also glide through the air.

Hazama: The controls for this game are very close to the rest of the Kingdom Hearts series. In the Playstation, circle button is attack, x button is jump, and triangle is for abilities, so it is exactly the same.

--It sounds like these controls will be very easy for Kingdom Hearts series fans to adapt to.

Hazama: We also put a lot of effort into the tutorial, so we don't think people will have issues with the controls.

--The stages are taken on in parties. Can you select your own party members?

Suzui: There are four parties, and each of them have fixed members. You cannot freely select party members. But, there are guest party members who are specific to certain worlds, and a Disney character will replace either of the two characters who aren't the leader, or have King Mickey join as a 4th party member to save you.

Hazama: King Mickey saves you, you can use healing items, and you can level up to increase your HP: we designed it so that even people without much experience with rhythm action games will be able to clear the stages with enough repetition.

--When do the guest members appear?

Suzui: When you are playing that guest member's corresponding Disney music, they will appear once out of every few turns. An announcement pops up letting you know in advance that a guest member is about to appear next. King Mickey comes to restore your HP as well as appearing during action inputs so you can earn more Rhythm Points. By the way, Rhythm Points are points you can collect as you play, and fixed amounts allow you to unlock items and tracks.

--Do the characters each have their trademark abilities?

Suzui: When it comes to abilities, there's an "Ability Symbol" that pops up, and if you time the right button well, you can do magic attacks or defeat large enemies.

--Just now you mentioned that we can glide in this game. How does gliding affect the rhythm action?

Suzui: It's basically the controls for what you would call a long note or held note in a usual rhythm game. When you glide the character floats, and you can then interact with what we call glide targets.

--So as a whole, how does the game progress?

Suzui: The plot advances as you complete missions called "world trips." On top of clearing the tracks for each world, you must fulfil conditions to get "stars." Once you have gathered a set number of stars a gate opens allowing you to progress to the next world.

--How many worlds are there?

Suzui: There are 47 regular worlds. Among them are 16 Kingdom Hearts original worlds, and 31 Disney worlds. Other than that, there are also 33 "Dark Holes," which are areas which only contain boss tracks.

--That's a lot of worlds.

Suzui: Yeah. It takes about 10 hours to just go through the world trips and reach the ending, which I think is a volume that's easy to enjoy. Then of course you can replay the tracks you unlocked to get high scores, battle your friends online or the AI, or enjoy co-op play with your friends on the same screen. There's enough content to keep you satisfied for a long time.

--Why did you add three different control styles: Normal Style, One Button Style, and Performance Style?

Suzui: I know there are people out there who will want to try the difficult tracks despite not being very good at rhythm games. But, trying to make it easier by reducing the number of target enemies would just make it monotonous. So instead we created One Button Style, which lets you play a difficult track without worrying about double presses or assigning

different buttons to targets. The game keeps different scores for each style, so the value between a One Button Style score and Normal Style score for the same song will be different.

--There are three different types of stages: Field Battle, Memory Dive, and Boss Battle. Can you tell us how each is different?

Suzui: Field Battles make up the majority of the tracks. Modes like VS Battle also take place in Field Battles. In Field Battles you make your way along the staves of the musical score, destroying enemies to the music.

In Memory Dives, you input targets to the rhythm as you enjoy memory clips. You can think of these as an evolved form of the Event Music Sequences from past Theatrhythm titles. Boss Battles are few in number. You fight boss characters at critical points during world trips.

These three modes are the result of all our problem solving and trial and error finding the right mix of Kingdom Heartsy direction, action, dynamic cutting, and fun gameplay that won't make you motion sick.

--Among the online battles, the Nintendo Switch version has a Friend Battle Royale mode that uses local wireless. This is a unique mode, isn't it.

Suzui: Friend Battle Royale came about during the final stages of development, when Hazama came to me and said he wanted to expand gameplay. Kingdom Hearts games usually have a super hard mode called Critical Mode, and this feels similar to that: a maximum of eight people can play together, and if you miss once you immediately drop out. This is fairly unusual for a music game, and we added it in the hopes that it gets you all fired up.

--Can you choose how many misses allowed until you're dropped?

Suzui: You can choose from once, twice or three times. But, GOOD and over counts as a hit, so unless it's your first time or you're super nervous, I don't think you will miss much. I don't think it is that difficult to stay in to the end.

--Incidentally, indieszero has until now focused on developing games for Nintendo consoles. Did you have any difficulty developing for multiple platforms?

Suzui: In the 24 years or so since indieszero was established as a game developer, we had never developed for a home console that wasn't Nintendo. Each platform differs both technically and culturally, which was difficult in various ways (laughs). But, releasing a game on multiple platforms means it will reach even more fans, which makes me happy. This game is available in ten languages, including Arabic, and I hope the world of Kingdom hearts will reach even more places and even more people.

--Ten languages? That's amazing.

Suzui: We were told lightly "it's just a rhythm action game, you should be able to do it," but it was pretty hard (laughs).

Hazama: Of course there is less text compared to other Kingdom Hearts series titles and, to generalize, this type of gameplay can be understood by intuition, so we thought this game was the perfect chance to try multiple languages.

--You would have been working during the COVID-19 disruptions. Did that affect how you worked?

Suzui: We did what we could remotely, while being careful of security issues, but no matter what you do there are limits to how much you can adjust rhythm action remotely. Perhaps if we were still at the resource and asset creation stage it would have been easier, but as we were in the end stage of development - final fine-tuning, making adjustments for each console - it was very difficult. I think we were able to solve the issues well and made it to the other side.

Nomura: I'm sure voice recording was extremely hard. I think there was a big impact on the overseas recording in particular.

Hazama: Yes. Recording had to continue despite voice talent being unable to leave their homes. I'm sure all titles that needed recording around that time faced the same hardships. We were mostly able to stick to our original development schedule, but the one thing that got tough at the end was definitely the recording. Although in Japan the studios re-opened comparatively quickly, that wasn't possible everywhere overseas, and that made things hard.

The future of the KH Series

--We also want to ask about the future of the KH series. KH3 was the end of the Dark Seeker saga, but there are still mysteries left unsolved, and the secret movie suggested brand new developments. What is in store for the KH series?

Nomura: 2022 will mark the 20th anniversary of the KH series, you know.

--Yes.

Nomura: So… I'm looking to the 20th anniversary and doing my best (laughs). As for me, my mind has already switched to the next title, and the Kingdom Hearts team is already working on something new. Melody of Memory was before we started work on the next title, so the main staff were able to help out. Everything I could announce next is something that would surprise you, so I hope you look forward to it.

--Having something to look forward to is good news for fans. Then, finally, please give us a comment on Melody of Memory.

Suzui: This game also features a collection element, where you can gather collector cards and view them in a museum. There are over 800 collector cards, which include key art from past games. There's also a music player that allows you to listen to the tracks, and a theater where you can view the movies. There is so much more to this title outside the main game. There's all kinds of alternative gameplay, like the VS and co-op modes, which will have you enjoying the game for a long time. I think you'll still be playing not one year but two or three years from now, or even forever.

--By the way, are there any plans for additional track DLC?

Suzui: There are no plans, no.

Hazama: The fact that we didn't prepare DLC is an embodiment of our wish to create a single game that as many people as possible, in as many places as possible, can enjoy with peace of mind for a long time. I hope you can enjoy the Kingdom Hearts series with your family, friends, and those nearby as well as all kinds of people over the internet.

--Then finally, your comment please, Nomura.

Nomura: This game was a lurking ambush of a Kingdom Hearts title: with everything going on in the world, it was difficult to know when it could be released, but I am relieved that it seems it will release without issue. This game is sort of like a highlights reel of the Kingdom Hearts series so far, so series fans can reminisce over this condensed version of the series, and people who know of Kingdom hearts but are daunted by the number of games in the series can treat this as a super easy entry point. If you play this game and find parts you want to know more about, I really hope you go and play the past titles. And, I hope as you enjoy it your mind starts spinning about the series developments coming up.

Sign. (2020, October 5). *Full Famitsu interview with Melody of Memory staff translated!* KHInsider. https://www.khinsider.com/news/Full-Famitsu-interview-with-Melody-of-Memory-staff-translated-17726. [Archived: https://web.archive.org/web/20250720211007/https://www.khinsider.com/news/Full-Famitsu-interview-with-Melody-of-Memory-staff-translated-17726].

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Playstation Japan Interview

Archive Author's Note: Non-interview content such as introductions, closing remarks, or unrelated images may have been omitted. This entry includes only the translated interview material.

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Translator: **goldpanner**

Aiming to condense the KH series into one game

—KINGDOM HEARTS Melody of Memory is the first rhythm action game in the KH series. How did the project come about?

Hazama: Suzui and I have been working on the Theatrhythm music game series for Final Fantasy and Dragon Quest. I had been saying for a long time that I wanted to do a KH rhythm action game, and about five years ago I submitted a proposal document to Nomura. Things were on hold for a while, but in the middle of production on KH3 things finally started to come together.

Suzui: We rewrote the proposal document from scratch and arranged to speak with Nomura again. During that talk it was decided that we would make a new rhythm action game - one that both capitalized on the unique nature of the KH universe and made sense as part of the series itself.

—Hazama and Suzui, what exactly about the KH series appeals to you?

Hazama: For me it's the music. I knew that if we were going to make another rhythm action game for Square Enix I wanted to base it on Kingdom Hearts.

Suzui: I agree, Yoko Shimomura's music is at the heart of the firmly constructed KH aesthetic. I just knew that if we used that music for a rhythm game, it had the nostalgia power to re-immerse fans in the universe of KH as they listened. The KH series also includes Disney worlds, so getting to play along to world-famous Disney tunes is another point of appeal for me.

—However, the music of the KH series is inseparable from the scenes from the series. Did you keep that in mind as you worked on the rhythm gameplay?

Suzui: We wanted to create something that would bring back the emotions you had from when you first played the games, and that would look back on that time as a whole. We wanted people to remember how they felt when the songs played during the scenes. So, we have incorporated elements into the backgrounds that match with the music, for example, important symbols from those scenes.

—Nomura, as the creator of the KH series, what do you think is the appeal of the music of KH?

Nomura: The music of KH has a sense of drama to it. Just the music alone has the power to bring back memories of the scene it was from. KH3 marked a punctuation place in the KH series. I thought it would be a good spot to have a title that looked back on the series as a whole. Since music has the power to draw memories into the mind, we produced this title with the intention of making a KH highlights reel that utilized the music of the series.

Creating the KH vibe with heavy involvement from the original staff

—What did you pay particular attention to in bringing out that KH vibe?

Suzui: I endeavoured to use the same sounds and motions as the rest of the KH series. Many members of the original team worked with us to make that happen. I made a prototype to show Nomura, and once the direction of the project had solidified, staff from production on KH series main titles joined in on every important part. That doesn't mean they were just signing off on data I made, either. Any 3D animation particular to a character was created by an original team member, and they polished it until it looked exactly like how Sora or whoever would move.

We put the highest level of care into the KH trademark sound effects. Sound is extremely important to rhythm games, so the sound team helped us fine tune all the BGM data audio volume etc. The sound effects were also handled by members of the original team. We experimented over and over - I'd be like, "In Theatrhythm we did it like this," and they'd be like "No, this time it should be like this" - until the sound effects and attack impact sounds for this title were born. I think working with people who have been working on the KH universe for so long made this a very deep collaboration.

—So the 3D animations were recreated for this game?

Suzui: Yes. Rhythm games have to respond as soon as you hit the button. The hit timing of the existing animations are slightly different, so they needed to be co-ordinated for this title. In a rhythm action game, if even one frame into a button press you're already wanting to hit the next attack. The original team members grasped the point of the game, which allowed us to exchange our opinions like "what if we use this frame?" or "what about this other way to do it?"

—This style of production sounds different to the Theatrhythm series.

Suzui: For Theatrhythm, the original staff would sign off on what we were producing. This time we were getting participation in the creation process itself, and taking feedback during

development. As development overlapped with KH3, we had them check all the effects when work on KH3 was starting to settle down, and got advice on how they were making things for KH3. Since this game has "Kingdom Hearts" in the title, I felt I had to create a game that wouldn't tarnish the legacy of the KH series.

—Hazama and Nomura, what kinds of orders did you give?

Hazama: My job was connection building, so I watched over Nomura and Suzui's exchanges. Indieszero had been doing a solid job on the Theatrhythm series ever since game one, so I had an extraordinary level of trust. They understood the weight of being entrusted with the KH series too, and were resolved to work hard on development. I had never seen Nomura do so much back and forth. They gave it their all right to the end, and I am very grateful to them.

Nomura: I was most concerned about whether players would get motion sickness. In the early stages of development people got motion sickness from the intensity of characters' movements. We went over it many times until he was able to fix it for me.

Suzui: We had the characters and the camera move a lot to give it that sense of impact. But we curbed the camera to the current form - also because it's important in a rhythm game to make it very easy to see what you need to do next. We spent about two and a half years on production, including making the prototype, but that first year was dedicated to working out the motion sickness problem.

Nomura: Once we had solved motion sickness, we moved to the issue of the display, including effects. After that we improved the play feel and degree of difficulty little by little… We tackled things in stages.

Suzui: Just as Nomura says, effects are very important to KH. As the degree of difficulty rises, the number of things on the screen increases, so we worked hard to make flashy effects without sacrificing playability.

—The screen on the finished product looks extremely KH-esque. It looks just like a KH battle screen.

Suzui: One of the first things Nomura raised when we spoke to him was that he didn't want a regular music game - he wanted gameplay that involved having fun beating enemies. So, we made the controls the same buttons as KH3. Circle is attack, X is jump, and triangle is special abilities - we made it so playing this game feels just like playing KH3.

KH's most emblematic song, Hikari, is included in full

—Regarding gameplay: in a released screen, we see Sora using Ars Arcanum. How are special abilities incorporated?

Suzui: This game has four parties, and each party has a leader. As you progress through Field Battles ability symbols appear - if you hit that button when defeating an enemy, the leader will unleash a trademark technique. The controls are intuitive, but they also feel fresh and new. You'll be able to enjoy the trademark KH stylish gameplay. We even added the KH series staple special ability Glide.

—Can you switch out your Keyblade?

Suzui: No, but you can collect cards of Keyblades from across the series. There's a collectibles feature in this game.

—How are Disney characters incorporated in the game?

Suzui: They appear as guest members. For example, when you play "Under the Sea," one of the characters other than the leader is switched out for Ariel. When you play a stage for the first time as a World Trip, the guest character always appears, but after that they only appear one time out of every so often. It's also possible to play without guest characters, for example if you want to play with your usual party because you are aiming for a high score. When a guest is in the party, some enemies are replaced by Friend Symbols that produce a unique sound. Also, you can use an item to add King Mickey to the party and have him play with you.

—It seems that there are three difficulty modes: beginner, standard and proud. Is there anything more difficult than that?

Suzui: Upon Nomura's proposal, we added some things we think will be a hit with rhythm game fans. That said, it's not a difficulty mode like the KH staple "critical mode" - we have added "performance styles" or play styles.

These styles use the L2/R2 buttons, touchpad etc, making button input more complex. These performance styles can be added to any of the difficulty modes - beginner, standard and proud - so you can play to your heart's content. The "critical mode" label has special connotations, so this time we decided to go with something different.

—We've heard that there are over 140 tracks. Can you break that down for us?

Suzui: We have taken tracks from every title in the series. That said, there aren't so many tracks from KH3 as development was happening at the same time. We used the original audio, to max out that nostalgic vibe.

—Are there any tracks with vocals?

Suzui: Yes. Hikaru Utada's songs are included of course, and there are some Disney tracks which originally have vocals in them.

—Among all the tracks, which are most memorable to each of you?

Hazama: Under the Sea. One of the best things about this game is that you can enjoy the music of Disney through KH audio. The musical score is fun to play, and I feel like in a way this song is symbolic to this game.

Suzui: Vector to the Heavens is a favourite among the staff of Indieszero, including myself. It's the battle music that plays when you fight Xion in Twilight Town in KINGDOM HEARTS 358/2 Days. I wonder if this might be one of the most popular tracks among KH fans. It's very fun to play the rhythm gameplay along to the piano, and when you are doing well it feels so satisfying, almost like you are hitting the keys yourself. It's great both on a gameplay level and an emotional level, and I really hope you play and experience it.

Nomura: For me it's Hikari. You can't think of KH without that song. It's my favourite song. I knew we couldn't leave it out.

Suzui: That might sound obvious, but it's actually very special to be able to use Hikaru Utada's music in a game.

—Can you describe the stage for Hikari?

Nomura: It's a Memory Dive - a stage that follows memories of the series. Memory scenes play as Sora flies through the air.

Suzui: Plus, the full song is included. Most rhythm game songs are about 2 minutes long, but since this is special, Hikaru Utada's songs are included in full. The clips that play were also edited especially for this title. You can also play the short versions as Field Battles.

New plot involving Kairi's memories

—The trailer released on announcement revealed that the story of this title concerns Kairi. How does this new plot feature in the game?

Nomura: I cannot yet talk about where the story comes in. But, there isn't a lot of story. The plot is a core element of the KH series, and I wanted to create a story around the highlights reel, so I wrote some original new plot. I wanted this rhythm game to have relevance to the plot. If you play it like a regular rhythm game, you'll discover there are plot hooks… That's how I feel it is, anyway.

—So that means, as we follow the highlights reel of episodes from the past, Kairi's as-of-yet unspoken memories will be revealed?

Nomura: It's not structured like all other games in the series so far, where the story comes as you play the game… I hope you play it and understand for yourself.

—It seems as though fans of the series have their hopes up for a plot that ties intimately to the main games, though…?

Nomura: All according to plan (laughs).

—In the trailer, a being in a black coat also appears. It seems many people have made the connection that "Melody of Memory→MoM→Master of Master," and are theorizing that this is the Master of Masters…

Nomura: That is also according to plan (laughs). You know what though, I was very stuck on the title. KINGDOM HEARTS Chain of Memories already uses the word "Memory," you see. But, I didn't think any other title would do, so I went with it. At the very least, it's "Memory" instead of "Memories" (laughs).

Suzui: I feel that this title represents the structure of the game as a whole.

Even if this is your first KH game, you will understand the whole series

—The release date is nearly here - where is development at?

Suzui: It's basically finished. We are in the final checking stages.

—Tell us how you felt upon seeing the completed game.

Hazama: Although our experience with the Theatrhythm series came in handy, this was a completely different game. Up until now, when making rhythm games, we would clip a single element from the vast material of Final Fantasy or Dragon Quest, and arrange it into something spectacular to offer to players. But this time, we made a completely unique rhythm game with both the visuals and gameplay feel of KH. We could only have completed such a game because we had both the reliable and detail oriented Indieszero, and the director who has been creating the KH series series from the beginning, Nomura. It felt amazing watching it come closer and closer to completion.

Nomura: I'd been involved a little with production on the Theatrhythm series, but never to this depth. I got a sense of what it's like making a rhythm game from scratch, and many times I stopped to wonder what I would have done by myself. In the latter half of production I took the time to check out various other rhythm games, but there was nothing else like this one. I think there is nothing more we could have done in this short time. It seems impossible how much we packed in in such a short time.

Suzui: It may be a short time to you, Nomura, but for us at Indieszero this was quite a long development period (laughs).

— Tell us about what developments are in store for the KH series.

Nomura: KH3 marked a punctuation place in the series, so now I'm wondering whether we can do something aimed at an even wider range of people. I'd love to expand our range of fans.

—Lastly, a comment to the fans looking forward to release.

Hazama: I hope many people will learn about KH. We increased the number of available languages - this was the first time we had ever put Arabic language in a PS4 game. There isn't just KH original music in this game, but also Disney music. There are modes to ease the difficulty, and I think even little children can play. Even if you've never played a KH game, I would love for you to give this one a try.

Suzui: I have spoken about the catchy and appealing points of this game in this interview. On top of that, there are lots of features that give this game a long life: you can aim for high scores, aim to collect the 800+ collector cards, and more. You can enjoy it as a highlights reel for the series too - I think we have made something you'll always want by your side. We also took into consideration KH series fans who aren't good at or don't like rhythm games, and added a one button play style where it doesn't matter which button you press, but still feels fun to play. I hope as many people play this game as possible.

Nomura: I know there are people who feel that the plot of the KH series has become confusing along the way, people who skipped games along the way, and people who are too intimidated by the length of the series to pick it up now. However, in this title, Kairi will narrate the story so far to you out loud. I think she explains it well enough that even KH series first timers will get it (laughs). Everything is a little piece of Kingdom Hearts, including the collectors cards. The entire KH series is narrated in this one game, so I hope both fans and newcomers alike will play.

Sign. (2020, October 8). *Playstation Japan interview on Melody of Memory fully translated!* KHInsider. https://www.khinsider.com/news/Playstation-Japan-interview-on-Melody-of-Memory-fully-translated-17738. [Archived: https://web.archive.org/web/20250720211321/https://www.khinsider.com/news/Playstation-Japan-interview-on-Melody-of-Memory-fully-translated-17738].

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Dengeki and 4Gamer Interviews

Archive Author's Note: Non-interview content such as introductions, closing remarks, or unrelated images may have been omitted. This entry includes only the translated interview material.
The note has been standardized into a footnote.

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Translator: **goldpanner**

Dengeki:

(About the box art)

Nomura: Even the pictures in the frames have special meaning, and it was a big pain trying to finish the drawing with no time to spare. I had this same thought when drawing the box art for KH3, too - the number of characters keeps growing and growing, and I want to do a reset on that trend (laughs).

(Sora is in his KH1 form, is this a Sora from the "world of memories"... or something?)

Nomura: That is… a secret (laughs).

4Gamer:

Nomura: I really liked the visuals [from the KINGDOM HEARTS MEMORIAL MUSIC BOX website], so I asked them whether they could make something with that vibe. However, the first time they showed me what they'd made in that style, I got so motion sick I nearly threw up (laughs).

(On his fave music)

Nomura: I like Hikari. That song is so deeply ingrained as the symbol of KH. Also, the title screen song.

Hazama: You mean Dearly Beloved.

Nomura: I can never remember its name (laughs).

(About the story)

Nomura: This is a slight tangent, but a long time ago we did a flip phone game called Kingdom Hearts Mobile, which had a "Tycoon" card-based minigame[15]. It involved characters playing Tycoon, and Disney asked us to add plot to it. They wanted there to be a reason that the characters would be playing Tycoon together. So yes, I wrote a story for that, and I thought, well, if I had given Tycoon a story then this game should very well have one too. I settled on Kairi as the narrator, and wrote new plot that leads into what is coming next.

[15] *The game he's referring to is Card Struggle. View the list of KH Mobile minigames here.*

Sign. (2020, October 9). *Interview Excerpts: The reason why Melody of Memory has story stems from KH Mobile.* KHInsider. https://www.khinsider.com/news/Interview-Excerpts-The-reason-why-Melody-of-Memory-has-story-stems-from-KH-Mobile-17749. [Archived: https://web.archive.org/web/20250720211442/https://www.khinsider.com/news/Interview-Excerpts-The-reason-why-Melody-of-Memory-has-story-stems-from-KH-Mobile-17749].

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Dengeki KHMOM Interview

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Translator: goldpanner

——The game and soundtrack released at the same time. First, let's talk about the game, KH MoM. Indieszero, who are famous for the Theatrhythm games, worker on this too. What kinds of things did you ask them to do with regards to development?

Nomura: the project proposal indieszero first gave us was, to put it simply, a KH version of Theatrhythm FF. It felt like a more advanced version of the game Theatrhythm Final Fantasy All-Star Carnival, in arcades now. After seeing that, I told them I didn't want to just make Theatrhythm KH.

The original reason Theatrhythm FF went with a side-view music score game design was because it fit the vibe of a "music game for Final Fantasy." The Theatrhythm games only use side-view because the original FF games did. So, I told them it wouldn't work to just do the same thing for KH. It was the same for "DQ" (Theatrhythm Dragon Quest).

So, we decided to start by thinking about what a "music game for KH" should look like from scratch, just like they did when developing Theatrhythm FF.

——Actually playing the game, we felt it was both similar to and completely different from Theatrythm.

Nomura: I wanted to find a way to fuse the action of KH with a music game. I had indieszero do a lot of trial and error on that point. It didn't come together immediately - it took a lot of test plays, rejecting stuff, trial and error and more before it reached its current form.

It wasn't easy to drop action into a music game. We broke down the process over and over. It was also extremely important to avoid screen sickness, since the original concept for what would make something KH-esque was "comfortable play." We put the utmost care into that during development.

——Despite being a music game, you jump, attack with the Keyblade and more - it really feels like playing a normal KH game.

Nomura: I'm so glad to hear that. The entire point was for the players, not just us, to feel that KH-esque comfortable play.

——We were also interested in how Kairi narrates the story as you progress in this game.

Nomura: This game doesn't have as much plot as a conventional KH series title, but there are still developments I want series fans to make sure to see. Kairi has a particular involvement in the story of this game - for the details, please play it and see for yourself.

——There are over 140 playable tracks. Did you give any opinions on the track list?

Nomura: Not really. I didn't want to go with a format where we release additional songs as DLC post-release, so I asked them to make sure to add as many songs as possible for maximum satisfaction in this one title. That's about it.

——Now, we want to ask about the KH series as a whole. KH3 served as a punctuation point in the plot, but there are still unresolved characters and mysteries, right?

Nomura: The remaining things that were foreshadowed will absolutely be resolved in future games, but, I do want to slightly change the format we've had until now. I want to shake things up with a different world and new story, while also resolving existing foreshadowing.

——KH UX Dark Road digs into Xehanort's past. Do the characters from that have a possible role in future games…?

Nomura: KH UX Dark Road isn't a game made with future developments in mind, it was a project I already had in storage. It was released into the world because the KH Union χ team came to me saying they wanted to do it.

I don't think the story will take any turns that will see Xehanort appearing again as a main boss to fight. But his impact remains, which you will see in the story of KH MoM.

——Foreshadowing and mysteries are one of the appeals of the KH series, but how far are you planning ahead during production? For example, when you were developing KH1, had you already envisioned the existence of Roxas?

Nomura: If I am working on a KH game, I am usually thinking about one game ahead. So to use your example of KH1, I already had the next game KH Chain of Memories in mind. So when I was working on KH1, I had vague ideas about starting with a new protagonist in KH2, where Roxas appears, but I hadn't formed a definitive concept at the time.

On the flip side, not all of my plans get used. KH UX Dark Road was one such thing that was in storage for a time.

——The KH series began on the PS2, but you didn't have a chance to release games on the PS3 or PS Vita. (※The KH1.5 & KH2.5 HD editions were released on the PS3.) Were any projects ever in the works for those consoles?

Nomura: I had some vague plans for the PS3, but as I was working on FF Versus XIII at the time, so nothing was ever in the works. The PS Vita has high specs for a handheld console, so

we decided anything we could make for it would probably just be better off on a home console, and in the end didn't make any plans.

——The PS5 and Xbox Series X are here now. We're wondering, if you get to make KH games for the next gen consoles, what will they be like?

Nomura: Each brand has already announced some big name titles. Any KH game for the next gen consoles will be a latecomer, so we would have to make something with enough surprise factor to match up to the existing line-up. Of course, we haven't announced we are making any new games for the PS5 or Xbox Series X. This is all hypothetical (laughs).

——Another huge appeal of the KH series is the music created by Yoko Shimomura and her music team. How did she come to be appointed as the composer for KH?

Nomura: She was recommended by the music department from back then. I'd met her thanks to Parasite Eve, and knew she was very easy to talk to, so I ended up asking her to do the music for KH too. She's been with us so long now, and it seems the fans adore her too.

——She's popular overseas too, isn't she?

Nomura: Once when I went overseas for KH related work, I was very surprised when the staff over there told me that the fans there call her a "Goddess." I asked them what they call me, and they said "Papa." I was like, what! (Laughs) The difference in level is just (laughs).

——During work on KH1, what kinds of orders did you give Shimomura regarding the music?

Nomura: KH's signature field music that switches to battle music is something I had wanted to do from the start. I remember her asking to do that. Also, I remember telling her that since this game has Disney worlds, I wanted the music to feel reminiscent of being in a theme park.

——What do you think is the appeal of Shimomura's music?

Nomura: I think perhaps the waves of emotions you can hear in her music. Perhaps you could say they gave a sense of storytelling to them.

——Takeharu Ishimoto & Tsuyoshi Sekito are also established KH series composers, aren't they?

Nomura: I think the first game I asked them to work on was KH Birth by Sleep. Ishimoto was also involved in TWEWY and Dissidia FF, so I had known him for a long time. As the fans know, he is very good at making stylish music, so I usually ask him to do battle music and the like.

Sekito is very good at making bright, joyful music, so he is a perfect fit for the KH aesthetic. I'm grateful to have him. Also, as a member of the Osaka team, he is in close contact with the developers and thus is a great person to ask for mini game and screens music.

——The soundtrack, packed with music by this team, released the other day.

Nomura: We weren't sure when to release KH MoM, until we heard that the soundtrack release date had already been set. I personally love matching numbers, so I was impressed with the date they had picked. I was a bit surprised that the KHIII soundtrack hadn't come out by then though (laughs).

——Considering when the game came out, that is kind of weird (laughs).

Nomura: Right? I'm glad it's finally out.

——Did you have anything to do with the soundtrack?

Nomura: I supervised the packaging design. I also wrote some commentary for the liner notes.

——The KH series has a huge amount of music. Which tracks in particular left the deepest impression on you?

Nomura: It would have to be the theme song Hikari (Simple and Clean). I hadn't imagined Utada Hikaru would accept, so this song left a deep impression on me in several senses. Back then a lot of people told me she probably would reject it. I decided to take a chance under the impression she would probably say no, but beyond all expectations she said yes.

When Hikari (Simple and Clean) was finished, they showed it to me in the recording studio. Listening to it in a studio with built in audio equipment magnified the impact of the music a hundred fold. I will never forget the goosebumps I had.

——Do you have any other favorites?

Nomura: It's hard to choose… I don't mean to toot my own horn, but I honestly think the KH series is packed with memorable music. I wouldn't give the OK on any song I didn't think was good in the first place, so it's natural I personally would think they're all good songs.

I think I'm fairly strict about the music. The tracks that make it into the game have undergone several retakes before they got my approval, so to me they're all worth listening to.

——What is your criteria for approving game music? We can imagine there are various points: the intro, overall melody, aesthetic fit, etc.

Nomura: Let's use the KH2 Twilight Town field music for example. I had a clear vision of Twilight Town in my head, so it was very important to me that the music fit the vibe. I was groping in the dark myself for a bit. I think it took a while before I approved that one.

But not all tracks involve the same criteria. For boss themes etc. I prioritize catchiness and coolness.

——KH is full of memorable tracks. So it was thanks to both your relentless retake requests, and the composers' effort to respond to them.

Nomura: An interview with the composer team was published a little while ago that touched on my retake requests (laughs).

I would like to defend myself for a second. They said I don't give detailed requests, like talk about the intro or the chorus or whatever. But I actually do give all kinds of instructions. "The intro is good but the part after that…" "Add this instrument" "Leave this part in, but cut that sound out" and stuff like that. In fact, I think I'm very detailed (laughs). Maybe it's because of how the go-between staff convey it? But I'm pretty sure they don't change what I say (laughs).

And then Sekito said I barely ever approve a track on the first take, but I'd say I approved about 80% of his music straight away (laughs). There was one track that took a very long time for me to approve, so maybe his impression was colored by that.

——Most people do remember negatives more than positives. Maybe times where you didn't point out specifics or rejected their work left a deeper impression, which was reflected in their comments (laughs).

Nomura: They gave the impression that I only ever give vague retake requests, so I want to defend my honor here (laughs).

——Speaking of, when you request a song do you give detailed instructions?

Nomura: Usually it's the development team who places orders for music, not me. The team decides what music is needed, and sends a request to the composers. Then, I participate in checking the created tracks. At that stage I either give a detailed retake request, or I give the OK straight away.

——Finally, a message for everyone looking forward to the soundtrack and game.

Nomura: We were able to release KH MoM and the soundtrack without a hitch despite these difficult times thanks to the hard work of everyone involved. I think both can be enjoyed for a long time, so please immerse yourself in memories of the KH series. I think perhaps KH MoM will see a little break in new titles in the series. The 20th anniversary of the series is coming in 2022. Things are moving along and it looks like I will be able to announce something good, so I hope you keep a close eye on us.

Arielle. (2020, November 24). *Dengeki KHMOM interview translated, Nomura says he will announce "something good" in 2022.* KHInsider. https://www.khinsider.com/news/Dengeki-KHMOM-interview-translated-Nomura-says-he-will-announce-something-good-in-2022-18010. [Archived: https://web.archive.org/web/20250720211528/https://www.khinsider.com/news/Dengeki-KHMOM-interview-translated-Nomura-says-he-will-announce-something-good-in-2022-18010].

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Kingdom Hearts IV Interviews

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Famitsu interviews Nomura on Kingdom Hearts 4 and Missing-Link

Archive Author's Note: Non-interview content such as introductions, closing remarks, or unrelated images may have been omitted. This entry includes only the translated interview material.

—

-- Congratulations on the 20th anniversary of the Kingdom Heart series.

Nomura: Thank you.

-- How does it feel, looking back on these past 20 years?

Nomura: When I look back, I realize how much time has passed, though it certainly doesn't feel that way as of late.

-- It's been three years since Kingdom Hearts III released.

Nomura: That's right. But during those three years, we've wrapped up Kingdom Hearts Union X and released Kingdom Hearts III Re Mind, Melody of Memory, and the cloud versions on Nintendo Switch, so time seemed to pass in the blink of an eye.

-- This series has been going on for 20 years, but there are many young fans as well. It really hit me when I saw the attendees at the 20th anniversary event.

Nomura: Yes, that's right. I feel that Kingdom Hearts has many fans who are relatively young. I think the appearance of Disney properties arouses their interest.

-- There were a lot of valuable materials exhibited at the venue. You had a message posted on Sora's statue, but there was a letter "x" on the third line from the bottom. What does it mean?

Nomura: It contains a hidden message, and the "x" is a clue. I've seen people discussing it on social media, but no one seems to have arrived at the answer yet.

過去の振り返りをしてみると
思えばこのキングダムハーツは
自分の持ち得る全でを注いで来た作品です。
完成してどうしても抜け殻になりがちですが
皆さんに喜んで頂きたいと
いつもそういう気持ちで心を奮い立たせて来ました。

作中語られる心の物語とは、
その行方、もういなくなってしまったり
もう会えなくなった離れた心への願いです。
いつも心は
傍にあるという思いを込めています。
x
20年支えて頂き本当に感謝しています。
そしてこれからもよろしくお願いします

-- I did think there was something rather peculiar about the phrasing of that message, with the "x," line breaks, etc. There must be a trick to it.

Nomura: It was very difficult to come up with (wry smile). I wanted to convey a message through my thoughts on the 20th anniversary in the text as you see it. I had to make it look a little unnatural so that people would discover the mystery, and then plant the hidden message on top of that.

-- I'll try to decipher it myself later (laughs).

Nomura: It's pretty hard, isn't it? None of our staff could figure it out either (laughs).

-- I was surprised by the faithful recreation of the area surrounding Shibuya Hikarie, the venue in which the event took place, in the Kingdom Hearts 4 trailer. Did you purposefully decide to hold the event there?

Nomura: We wanted to do it at Shibuya Hikarie if possible. Shibuya is an easily recognizable landmark, and you can recreate the real world more realistically in a game if you're familiar with the setting.

-- Is Shibuya part of the world of Quadratum?

Nomura: Yes, it is.

-- While we're on that topic, is there any possibility of a reunion with the characters from The World Ends With You, who appeared in Kingdom Hearts 3D?

Nomura: Strictly speaking, it is a different world from the Shibuya of The World Ends With You. Some fans believe there is a connection to TWEWY and Stranger of Paradise: Final Fantasy Origins, but there's really no such thing.

-- Is the room where Sora wakes up also in Shibuya?

Nomura: That is located in Minami-Aoyama.

-- A great location! (laughs) So you've even established that?

Nomura: Yes, we've also specified the room layout. The furniture and whatnot haven't been decided yet, so the interior will be undergoing some changes. That room will serve as the base for the early parts of the game.

-- What kind of world is Quadratum? In Melody of Memory, it was described as "the other side of our world." Is this a new world that does not belong to the Realm of Light, Realm of Darkness, or Realm Between?

Nomura: That's one interpretation.

-- In the trailer's narration, Quadratum was described as "a world full of life- but for you and I, it's similar to an "afterworld," I suppose." What does this mean?

Nomura: It means that perception changes depending on your viewpoint. The Master of Masters says something along those lines in UX.

From Sora's point of view, Quadratum is a world on the other side of his own world and reality: a fictional world. However, from the point of view of the inhabitants of Quadratum, their world is the real one, and the place Sora and his friends hail from is the other side, the fictional world.

This time, I think the theme will be something akin to the "contrast between people from different positions."

-- I see. The narrator is Strelitzia, and she's also from Sora's side, so that's why she says "for us," right?

Nomura: That's correct.

-- I've been told that the male narrator is the same person who voiced over the footage of Kingdom Hearts Missing-Link?

Nomura: Yes, it's the same character being played by the same person. The character is someone who has already appeared in the series, but this is the first time they've been voiced.

-- The place where Donald and Goofy are is the original world, right? What would a realistic Sora look like in the original world?

Nomura: Donald and Goofy are looking for clues to Sora in the original world. Everything you saw in the trailer before the title appeared is from Quadratum, and Sora will look realistic there, but if he returns to the original world, then the shaders will make him look like Donald and Goofy.

-- The battle scenes show Keyblade transformations and free-running, giving the impression that this is an evolution of Kingdom Hearts III.

Nomura: Yes, that's right. In the video, you can also see button icons that appear when an enemy punches you. You can think of that like the reaction commands we had in Kingdom Hearts II.

-- Oh, so it's a command that appears briefly under certain circumstances and, if successfully executed, triggers a special action.

Nomura: The reason it's appears with a black circle is because we haven't announced the platforms yet.

-- I see.

Nomura: After KH3 released, we saw quite a few people asking for reaction commands to return, so we brought them back.

-- The word "Build" is at the bottom of the command window on the lower left. What does it refer to?

Nomura: The battle concept this time around is "Scrap & Build," with Build being the command that represents it.

-- "Scrap & Build"... What is that exactly?

Nomura: I can't give you the details yet, but destruction and reconfiguration are key. Please wait for more information.

-- Kingdom Hearts 4 lies in the Lost Master Arc, but to what saga does Kingdom Hearts Missing-Link belong to?

Nomura: The Kingdom Hearts series does not solely include the Dark Seeker Arc up to Kingdom Hearts 3, and the Lost Master Arc from Kingdom Hearts 4. There is also the X series that includes Kingdom Hearts X, Union X, and Dark Road. Kingdom Hearts Missing-Link is a work that fills in the blank period and bridges them together.

-- We see Brain in the trailer for KHML. Is he the main character?

Nomura: No, the main character will be the player themselves. It's a create-an-avatar game like KH Unchained X.

-- The game seems quite challenging, with a focus on action-packed battles that can be enjoyed in multiplayer, as well as the addition of location-based game elements utilizing AR technology. You say that you can move around without actually leaving the house. Does you mean the character is the one who can do the moving?

Nomura: Yes. There's a Street View in Google Maps, isn't there? You just tap on the place you want to see and it'll take you there. I imagine KHML to be just like that.

-- So suppose I wanted to go to Okinawa on foot.

Nomura: You certainly could, but it'd take quite a bit of time to get there (laughs). By using points, you can teleport immediately to the place you want to go.

-- So if you don't want to spend the points, you can go out and walk around yourself. It's up to the player.

Nomura: Correct.

-- If the field is linked to the real world, does that mean we won't see any Disney worlds in the game?

Nomura: We're experimenting with a variety of things, but depending on the timing, the terrain and atmosphere will be partially based on Disney world motifs.

In the early stages of development, we covered the entire map with all sorts of motifs as though it were a skin, but it seemed like overkill, so we're trying to balance things out.

-- Collecting figure-like pieces sounds pretty interesting, and multi-action battles seem like they'll be fun.

Nomura: I'm trying to do something sharp that I can't do in the main story. Please look forward to the closed beta test scheduled for this fall.

Sign. (2022, April 14). *Famitsu interviews Nomura on Kingdom Hearts 4 and Missing-Link.* KHInsider. https://www.khinsider.com/news/Famitsu-interviews-Nomura-on-Kingdom-Hearts-4-and-Missing-Link-19005. [Archived: https://web.archive.org/web/20250720204719/https://www.khinsider.com/news/Famitsu-interviews-Nomura-on-Kingdom-Hearts-4-and-Missing-Link-19005].

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Famitsu Interview

Archive Author's Note: Non-interview content such as introductions, closing remarks, or unrelated images may have been omitted. This entry includes only the translated interview material.
This interview is not only about Kingdom Hearts IV but also Missing-Link and Dark Roads. For now, it will be included in this section.

—

-- I was surprised by the faithful recreation of the area surrounding Shibuya Hikarie, the venue in which the event took place, in the Kingdom Hearts 4 trailer. The video was rendered in Unreal Engine 4, but with development moving to Unreal Engine 5, it seems that the graphics will become even more impressive.

Nomura: Currently, we've already begun working in UE5, so this may be the only time we show you footage from UE4. The next time we show the game should be in UE5, so please look forward to it.

-- Is the room where Sora wakes up also in Shibuya?

Nomura: That is located in Minami-Aoyama. However, the location of the main unit is different from what you see from the balcony, so the Osaka staff will come by later on to do some location scouting to make adjustments.

-- Melody of Memory featured a woman who was familiar with Quadratum. She was only voiced and not shown, but will she appear in KHIV?

Nomura: That is still a secret. As I said at the event, there was a time when I wasn't sure whether I would choose KHIV or VERUM REX as my next project. However, she is a central VERUM REX character.

-- I see.

Nomura: There seems to be a lot of anticipation for VERUM REX overseas (bitter smile). When Yozora was first introduced in KHIII, I got the impression that his reception was less than welcoming, but I guess that was not the case.

-- The logo has been redesigned.

Nomura: With the start of a new story, we took the opportunity to simplify the font. However, we wanted to retain that "KH" feel in spite of the new simplicity, so it took a lot of trial and error to reach a design that struck the right balance.

-- One year has passed since KHIII, so Sora's character design in KHIV is slightly more mature. His hair is silky and realistic, and even the impression he gives off has changed.

Nomura: Even when we were working on KHIII, there were discussions within the team about how realistic we should make the characters. We certainly could have made the hair silky smooth in KHIII if we wanted to. This time, since we are starting anew with the Lost Master Arc, we decided to make some drastic changes. The [characters'] appearances also match the nature of the world [they're in].

-- I hope we will meet Sora again, looking as he did in KHIII. Has this new costume design been finalized?

Nomura: No, not yet. There may still be some finer changes, such as with the details. As for the silhouette, I think it'll be similar to the one in this trailer.

-- The Master of Masters and his six disciples, the "Lost Masters," disappeared after the Keyblade War in Unchained χ. What happened to them?

Nomura: Even though we didn't show exactly what happened, we do know that five of the Foretellers, with the exception being Luxu, vanished after the Keyblade War.

-- So, they disappeared. But in KHIII's epilogue, Luxu "summons" his fellow disciples back and they are reunited. Are the Lost Masters a threat to Sora and his friends?

Nomura: Simply put, the Lost Masters are an opposing force like Organization XIII. However, not all of them have the same intentions. Their motives will be newly depicted in KHIV, so in that sense, I hope you will enjoy this new arc from the very beginning.

-- Who are the two wearing black coats in the trailer? One of them seems to be the Master of Masters...

Nomura: That's still a secret (laughs). By the way, in addition to Oka (Masaru Oka) who has worked with me on scenarios for the KH series up until now, I've asked Ishibashi (Akiko Ishibashi), a newcomer to the KH series, to join us in writing the scenario for KHIV. This marks the start of our 3-person team.

-- Why did you ask Ishibashi [to join you]?

Nomura: The biggest reason is because of how she factors into approaching new users, from the perspective of someone who has no experience with the KH series. She did a great job of integrating the characters' values and principles in NEO: The World Ends With You and other works, and I thought her way of thinking would be well-suited for KH.

-- About the EX gauge in the lower right...?

Nomura: Please wait for more information on that.

-- Changing the subject, what did you request for the new songs used in the trailer?

Nomura: I requested a sense of anticipation building towards the latter half, so you'd feel like you're waiting for a hero to appear. It was very difficult since I had to ask for adjustments to be made to the length of the song to match that of the video at the last minute. For Missing-Link's song, I wanted it to have vocals throughout, so the chorus was included in this trailer.

-- What are the "societies that sprawl and branch like veins" mentioned in the trailer?

Nomura: KH Missing Link takes place about 4 generations after Ephemer's time. His descendents have each formed their own societies: the main family who carries his bloodline is the "Society of Successors", while the branch family who doesn't is the "Society of Non-Successors".

Just like KHIV, we're considering how to approach new users and have asked Fukazawa (Ruiko Fukazawa), another newcomer to the series, to write the scenario.

-- The Keyblade seems to be strengthened by setting "pieces," which are shaped like figurines. That's pretty unique.

Nomura: We wanted them to look rich, so we made them in the form of figurines. The pieces can be obtained not just from the gacha, but also in the field. For example, you might get a message that says "___ pieces are currently available at ___ in Shibuya."

-- I spotted some pieces in the trailer that resembled Terra, among other characters. Terra is a character who hails from a time period long after Missing-Link, so are the pieces just created for the purposes of the game?

Nomura: The purpose of this association [between characters and pieces] is to collect records of all the worlds' pasts, presents, and futures. Each piece provides information on its character from all eras, and you'll be able to draw upon their abilities to fight.

-- I see. The battles look like the action in KHIII.

Nomura: The project started in parallel with KH Union Cross. We knew that if we were going to make the next mobile iteration of KH, we had to make sure it'd play similarly to the mainline games in order to satisfy the audience. Therefore, it was inevitable that we'd aim to create an experience that'd be close to the action you'd find in those titles.

-- Collecting figurine-like pieces sounds interesting, and the multiplayer action battles look quite fun.

Nomura: We're trying to create sharp things that we might not be able to accomplish in the mainline games. Please look forward to the closed beta test scheduled for this fall.

-- You mentioned that you added additional scenarios to KH Dark Road, more than what was originally planned.

Nomura: Initially we were planning to include the [other] classmates, as well as delve further into Xehanort's companions. However, due to a change of plans, I asked Kanemaki (Tomoco Kanemaki), who also worked on KH 358/2 Days and writes the series' light novel adaptations, to put together a scenario with a limited number of stories. The plan received further changes after that, and I had the team's scenario writers make adjustments to focus solely on Xehanort. However, I felt that we were losing too much by making all of these cuts, so I decided to add them back in at the end. As I said at the event, you'll even learn why Master Xehanort became bald (laughs).

-- Oh (laughs). I'm looking forward to it. Lastly, what plans do you have for the remaining duration of KH's 20th anniversary?

Nomura: KH Dark Road is nearing completion, and the two women who are working on the event scenes are giving their all, so please give them your support. It'll just be a little bit longer. KH Missing Link is scheduled for a closed beta test this fall. KHIV's development is being prioritized, and we don't have plans to release additional info for a while.

I'm hoping to put some other stuff together, so please wait for more information from official announcements.

Sign. (2022, April 27). *Nomura discusses Kingdom Hearts 4, Missing-Link, and Dark Road in extended Famitsu interview.* KHInsider. https://www.khinsider.com/news/Nomura-discusses-Kingdom-Hearts-4-Missing-Link-and-Dark-Road-in-extended-Famitsu-interview-19073. [Archived: https://web.archive.org/web/20250720205128/https://www.khinsider.com/news/Nomura-discusses-Kingdom-Hearts-4-Missing-Link-and-Dark-Road-in-extended-Famitsu-interview-19073].

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Game Informer Interview

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Kingdom Hearts recently hit its 20-year milestone, but more importantly, Square Enix debuted Kingdom Hearts IV. The reveal trailer showcased a more realistic-looking Sora in a much different world, ushering the series into a new era. We couldn't think of a better time to sit down with director Tetsuya Nomura and discuss the series' evolution. He also dropped some hints about what to expect for Kingdom Hearts IV. Read on to discover the future of Final Fantasy characters, his hesitation about Sora's appearance in Smash Bros. Ultimate, and why you shouldn't worry about Disney's presence in Kingdom Hearts IV.

The series recently celebrated 20 years. How does it feel to look back on the last two decades, and what do you hope Kingdom Hearts' legacy will be?

Nomura: I feel like 20 years is a very long time, except it also doesn't really feel that way. I have vague memories of visiting the Disney offices in the US and having meetings throughout the long history that we've had. But, when it comes to memories of the development and just making the actual game – it's just kind of fuzzy. It doesn't feel like anything has become a memory because the series is still continuing, and it's all still in real-time. The series is always evolving; the stories are still going on. Regarding the legacy, I suppose the heart is a central theme to the story of Kingdom Hearts. We will continue to depict that and tell the story of the heart in different ways.

The series is known for its cliffhanger finales. How did you approach keeping these satisfying but still ensuring fans felt like they had some answers?

With every title, we just try to create a game that is contained within itself. There's an actual ending in a sense to each game, which is probably something similar to any game that is made. But since the Kingdom Hearts storyline has so many mysteries and the story is ongoing, there are just so many different things that we can get into. Fans say every time they think they figure something out, there's now a new mystery that they need to figure out.

I suppose it's a combination of just trying to make sure that the game is contained within itself and comes to a clear stop, but then also it's just trying to prepare a new mystery so that fans are aware of what will be important in the next title or the next part of the story that's coming up. Personally, I feel like this approach is not really anything special, it's something that all game developers might be considering when they make their games.

What has been your favorite cliffhanger to see fans' reaction to?

The first thing that comes to mind is the ending for the original Kingdom Hearts. I feel like that was maybe really unexpected on the player's part because people playing that first game probably didn't think that the story would continue beyond that. Also in Kingdom Hearts III, when Luxu takes off their hood at the very end … I really enjoyed seeing the fans' reactions, just because it was something that I'd really hoped for.

Did you expect characters from games like Birth By Sleep and Kingdom Hearts 358/2 Days to become so popular? Do you feel like their stories are complete, or we can expect more of these characters to pop up in Kingdom Hearts IV?

I really didn't think that the characters from these two titles would become this popular. I had thought that players wanted to see more of characters like Sora or Riku. It was kind of unexpected that the characters from these two titles were so well received. As far as including them or continuing their story in Kingdom Hearts IV … The story for Kingdom Hearts IV is focused more on Sora's disappearance. I'm not quite sure if there will be room to really explore the other characters' stories as much, but I'm aware and the team is aware that these characters are very popular and people want to see more of them. So, if possible, it would be great to include more of them or continue to share more of their story in future opportunities.

Another area where we saw Kingdom Hearts' popularity surge was seeing Sora in Super Smash Bros. Ultimate. Can you talk about your feelings on having Sora involved?

Obviously, I was very happy that we were able to have Sora make an appearance in Smash Bros. Ultimate. Most of the feedback when Sora was [announced] for Smash Bros. Ultimate was, 'I can't believe Disney okayed for him to be in this game.' Behind the scenes, I was actually the one being very picky about his appearance in Smash Bros. Disney was the one that was like, 'Go ahead! This is a great opportunity.' I thought it would be tough to pull off because it might clash with the established lore in Kingdom Hearts and the Disney worlds, so it was an opportunity I had to consider very carefully. After seeing how happy everybody was in welcoming Sora to Smash Bros., I feel like the end result was really great.

Xehanort is such a memorable villain, and now we're going into the Lost Master Arc. How do you follow that up and create fresh conflict with new adversaries?

As you mentioned, Xehanort is a really memorable character. We did take a lot of time to flesh out this enemy presence throughout the series. It all started in the original Kingdom Hearts, where there's Ansem and Kingdom Hearts II with Xemnas – basically, these two

figures that stem from one person. In the first game, we explored just the heart portion. In the second game, we explored the physical body. It all led up to the full physical embodiment of the character. I really like that we took this slow-burn approach to build up the character. I feel the presence of the enemy character is so important for them to be a really good character. It gives the story a lot of depth and density. I feel like we pulled that off.

And now we're moving on to the next saga. In the trailer for Kingdom Hearts IV, we mentioned The Lost Master Arc. We're going to be delving into a new enemy figure for the continuation of the story. This new enemy has a lot to do with the masked characters that appear at the end of Kingdom Hearts III. They're going to be obstacles that stand in front of Sora. Also, in Kingdom Hearts 2.8, we showed what kind of characters they are, so the enemies have already appeared within the series. We'll be reintroducing them, and obviously, there will be more new characters as well, but we really can't go into detail on those characters just yet.

Do you feel it's important to keep Sora as the main protagonist, or do you ever see the series moving beyond him?

As far as spin-offs go, we've had main characters that were not Sora, but in terms of the mainline series, I think Sora is actually the only real candidate for the main character. I think if Sora is no longer the main character then I would also feel like that would indicate the end to the numbered titles. He's *that* important to the series.

We saw Donald and Goofy in the Kingdom Hearts IV reveal, but one question a lot of fans have is how much will Disney still be integral to the series?

With regards to Kingdom Hearts IV, players are definitely going to see a few Disney worlds in there. I just want to mention that they don't need to worry so much about this aspect of the game. It might feel slightly different from previous Kingdom Hearts titles, but once players have had a chance to play the game, I'm sure they'll be relieved to find that it is definitely a Kingdom Hearts title. It's the game series that they've come to know and love.

As far as the graphic qualities ... since with each new title, the specs have been really increasing and there's so much more we can do in terms of graphics, it kind of limits the number of worlds that we can create in a sense. At this time we're considering how to approach that, but there will be Disney worlds in Kingdom Hearts IV.

When did you start working on ideas and planning for Kingdom Hearts IV, and what things did you know you wanted to incorporate early on?

Whenever I’m working on a title, I’m already thinking about what I want to incorporate in the next one. For example, with Kingdom Hearts IV, I had already started thinking about what I wanted to do with it while making Kingdom Hearts III. This is more in terms of characters, worlds, or gameplay systems I want to implement. Every time it’s the same process; I’m constantly thinking of what to improve or change in the next title.

For example, in Kingdom Hearts II we introduced the reaction command system. I felt like fans didn't take to it well, and it wasn't that popular. So in Kingdom Hearts III, we took that system out, but then fans said, 'Why’d you take it out?' So now we’re considering bringing it back in Kingdom Hearts IV. The challenge is with the action gameplay. It’s hard to execute the satisfying action moves when the footing isn't very secure. That's something we're working on and hoping we can realize as an aspect of gameplay in Kingdom Hearts IV.

Will we be spending a lot of time in Quadratum? Does having a more realistic setting give you bigger opportunities to try new things with the gameplay?

I think it will be a pretty good amount of time since it is set as the initial base within the game. You spend time there and then go to different worlds and then go back there. Because the graphics are more realistic this time around, I feel like there’s more of a realistic daily life aspect to Sora’s life. You can see him go in and out of his room and spend time there. I feel like players will get to see more of the day-to-day routines he goes through.

As far as worlds go, in the past, we’ve featured a lot of Disney worlds and among those, the most realistic one was probably *Pirates of the Caribbean*. This time around we’re spending some time in the actual real world. This was a challenge we had for ourselves – just to see how realistic can we make this, and that's something that we're working on right now. For now, we can't really dive into any further details than that.

Fans have been very concerned about the lack of Final Fantasy characters in newer entries. Do you still want to dial down on the amount of them in the series, or is Kingdom Hearts IV a chance to bring in more cameos?

I understand there weren't that many Final Fantasy characters in Kingdom Hearts III. One thing I want to clear up is that a lot of fans are saying that Kingdom Hearts is this collaboration between Disney characters and Final Fantasy characters. But I really feel like that's not the basic concept of Kingdom Hearts; that's not exactly what Kingdom Hearts is.

When we released the first title, we had only a few original Kingdom Hearts characters. When they were interacting with really well-known, beloved Disney characters, I felt nobody

really knew these new characters, so it was harder for them to stand their ground just yet. And so, we had a lot of Final Fantasy characters involved to lend a hand for everyone to get to know these [original Kingdom Hearts] characters better.

Now, there are so many original characters from Kingdom Hearts that are so well-loved, and people want to see more of those characters. With Kingdom Hearts III, since we did have so many original Kingdom Hearts characters, it was hard to find room for including more Final Fantasy characters. We're trying to find a good balance for that. I know that some fans were concerned about that and weren't too happy and wanted to see more Final Fantasy characters. That's something we definitely are thinking about. But just with the sheer number of original characters that we have now, it's hard to say what the exact balance is going to be and how it will play out in Kingdom Hearts IV. We can't really give you a firm reply on this just yet.

Do you want to give one final tease for fans about what they can look forward to?

With regards to Kingdom Hearts IV, unfortunately, there's not any new information that I'm going to be able to share for a while. But if people could really dive into this interview that we had today, I did reveal a little bit of new information and more details during this conversation. So it'll be great if people could consider that and find some new information that way.

I also wanted to mention Kingdom Hearts Missing-Link. We're working towards launching the closed beta within the year. I know that not everybody is really into smartphone games, so some fans might not be really excited for it, but we are making it so that it's something that anyone can jump right into. Compared to our past mobile releases, it's a lot closer to the series and also connected in many ways to Kingdom Hearts IV.

The easiest way to get more new information and hints about Kingdom Hearts IV would be first to play Missing-Link. There will also be some more mysteries, not related to Kingdom Hearts IV specifically, but just throughout the series in it. Also, some figures that appear in Missing-Link are tied to Kingdom Hearts IV. That's all I can really say now.

Wallace, K. (2022, June 14). *Nomura Reveals More On Kingdom Hearts IV And The Series' Future With Final Fantasy*. Game Informer. https://gameinformer.com/exclusive-interview/2022/06/14/nomura-reveals-more-on-kingdom-hearts-iv-and-the-series-future-with. [Archived: https://web.archive.org/web/20250720205333/https://gameinformer.com/exclusive-inter

view/2022/06/14/nomura-reveals-more-on-kingdom-hearts-iv-and-the-series-future-with].

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Kingdom Hearts Mobile Games Interviews

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KHX/Unchained X/Back Cover Interviews

Archive Author's Note: This section includes the summary provided by The Kingdom Hearts Info Block on Tumblr using a KHInsider article and a KH13 post (in this order) and are credited as well.

—

Concerning the story, with KHX that precedes it, the scenario in KH Unchained X will be easier to catch up?

Nomura: Yes, it's because I think proceeding through KHX's story is time consuming to catch up.

So we will be enjoying the story in how KH Unchained X relates to KHIII.

Nomura: That's right. Leading to KHIII, it's the most ancient story in the series, and Sora and gang wouldn't be in these worlds… it will take a look on what has happened a long time ago. New keywords will appear for KHIII if you play KH X or KH Unchained X, it will make you think "oh?". In addition, we thought about gimmicks that would be "good to play".

In relations to the keywords, there is likely a whole bunch of them that ties in KHIII.

Nomura: When explained, it becomes possible to talk about the story of KHIII (laughs). However, I will say it's a story that wouldn't really hurt to know. KHX is just a fancier way to experience what is in KH Unchained X…

Again? Earlier you told us about "going back between the two worlds" and how are KHX and KH Unchained X different?

Nomura: I guess so (laughs). Soon, there will be a hint for the next story scheduled for KHX. Because I am able to enhance the execution of the story in KHX, it will be possible to look forward to future story progressions. It should be noted that in the story of KH Unchained X, which will be essentially the same as KHX, there are tricks to enjoying both of these two works.

For the future of the story, would you be able to tell us a little more?

Nomura: The scenario heads towards depicting the beginning of the 'Keyblade War' that occurred. However, as there are Keyblade Wielders in the World later on, they must not all have been destroyed in the Keyblade War. That is the basis of this story.

Since it has been stated there would be a Keyblade War, it would have scenarios dedicated to it?

Nomura: The outline is. KH X and KH Unchained X tell the story of how everything began. Why was Xehanort so obsessed with Kingdom Hearts? You should be able to glimpse the reason for that during these two titles.

That is an eventful (laughs). In addition, I think there is progression between the Book of Prophecies and the foretellers.

Nomura: The Foretellers are the equivalent to those known as Keyblade Masters in the future of this universe, and from hereon out they will start to make their own individual moves. Also, thanks to a character named Ephemera who appeared in the new scenario in KH X, players should have some doubts about the Foretellers and the Unions. From there we will chase the mysteries of the Foretellers and the Book of Prophecies, and draw closer to the Keyblade War. However, players are trying to avoid war breaking out, so please keep an eye on what happens with that.

So this means, I have no choice but to play to prepare for KHIII!

Nomura: If you do know, then you will enjoy the world of KH all the more, make no mistake. However, you don't have to know everything. The protagonist himself, Sora, doesn't know everything. That said, I'd be happiest if you did play it (laughs). If you do give it a try, I think you'll be surprised at what a rich experience you get for free.

Additional Information: The Book of Prophecies talks about the triumph of darkness.

Five foretellers were given a passage that says, "The light has been extinguished by the war of this land. The world is covered in eternal darkness." It describes that the victory of darkness has been determined. In order to prevent it, many Keyblade wielders were made to collect the light.

Additional Information: Hidden power of the Book of Prophecies

In the series, it is possible to reproduce the future of the world by the Book of Prophecies. It is told to obtain people and power from the future. In KHX, Ephemera discussed that the Book of Prophecies caused faraway worlds to be reproduced within the vicinity. This explains the emergence of Disney characters whose presence came from the future.

—

–Who was speaking during the most recent trailer for [KhxBC]?

[Nomura]: It was Chirithy.

The stage is set in the worlds just before the Keyblade war

The story of [KHUx] unfolds just before the "Keyblade war" of the distant past. At this time, there were many Keyblade wielders, and many of them were thought to have participated in the war, but the truth is not clear. A huge point of the story will be whether or not the details of the Keyblade war will be revealed.

The differences between the three titles marked with [χ]

There are three titles with [χ] in them. The worlds are connected, but [KHχ] and [KHUχ] are from playable productions told from the Keyblade wielder's perspective. [KhχBC] will be a story focused on the Foretellers and is a theatrical production.

There's a traitor amongst the Foretellers!?

In the new production [KhχBC]'s most recent trailer, the Foretellers' dialogue mentions a traitor in their ranks. The Foretellers' relationship with humans is a mystery, but it does not seem like an amicable one. Also, the Foretellers' unions are also not organizations with the same goal. The actions of the Foretellers from here on will become an important point!

The mysterious "Lost Master"

In the scene where a young Xehanort and Eraqus discussed the war, they mentioned a term we had never heard before, the "Lost Master." If we determine "lost" to mean "someone or something lost," then according to the timeline, it's very possible that it involves someone in the universe of [KHUχ]. This person was formerly one of the Foretellers, but will this mystery really be solved in [KHIII]!?

–Please tell us more about the new characters Chirithy and Ephemera, as well as the Foretellers.

Nomura: Chirithy is the player's guide in the [χ] series. There are a number of players, but the series is one full of mysteries, and I'm often asked even by the staff members who are in the middle of playing if Chirithy is an enemy or an ally. As for the Foretellers, what I can say now is that they are the people who became the origin of the Keyblade Master. The world of [χ] is unfolding beyond their expectations. Ephemera is

like the players, a wielder who is gathering light, but he feels a great amount of doubt towards the unions formed by the Foretellers, and he is looking into the mysteries of the worlds by himself.

–In the most recent trailer for [KhχBC], words like "Master of Masters," "Six Apprentices," "Traitor," etc. appeared. Please tell us more about each of these.

Nomura: Master of Masters refers to the teacher of the six apprentices and the person who created Chirithy. This person is quite eccentric but is greatly praised by the six apprentices. As I answered in a previous interview, five of the six apprentices created unions, and they instruct Keyblade wielders. The one remaining apprentice hasn't been talked about at all yet, so please wait for [KhχBC]. "Traitor" becomes a keyword of [KhχBC]'s story, so I think it will all become clear with its release.

kh-info-block. (2015, May 18). *KHX/Unchained X/Back Cover Interviews*. Tumblr. https://kh-info-block.tumblr.com/post/119290467781/khxunchained-x-interviews. [Archived: https://web.archive.org/web/20250720173125/https://kh-info-block.tumblr.com/post/119290467781/khxunchained-x-interviews].

Joey. (2015, May 14). *Tetsuya Nomura talks connection between KH3 and Unchained X.* KHInsider. https://www.khinsider.com/news/Tai-Yasue-talks-about-Kingdom-Hearts-Re-Mind-in-Twitter-Q-A-16450. [Archived: https://web.archive.org/web/20250720173207/https://www.khinsider.com/news/Tetsuya-Nomura-talks-connection-betweet-KH3-and-Unchained-X-5434].

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Union X DARK ROAD Completion Commemorative Q&A

Archive Author's Note: Non-interview content such as introductions, closing remarks, or unrelated images may have been omitted. This entry includes only the translated interview material.

—

Translator: Goldpanner

First of all, my apologies for the wait.

I wanted to make it bigger, and there were parts I wanted to tell in more detail, but as this size of this installment physically went over capacity, I have depicted the essentials. I hope you enjoy it - both the completion of "Dark Road," and the gameplay, which we worked on quite a bit to make the difficulty level more balanced and easier to play. Also, the plot interweaves with future developments in "Missing-Link" and "KHIV," so keep that in mind.

Below, I have created a supplementary Q&A for this installment - if you're interested, I'd love for you to read it.

*This contains heavy spoilers for the end of the story. Be warned if you have not yet finished the game.

"KINGDOM HEARTS Union X DARK ROAD" Completion Commemorative Q&A

Q1: In previous titles, we saw the Xehanort who leaves Destiny Islands as a young man. He seems a lot younger in DR.

A1: DR presents the correct version. For previous games, we used the young man model we already had as a catch-all symbolic representation of "his youth," in order to save cost modeling a young boy version. In KHIII, they were specifically split. I'd like you to interpret it as the symbolic representation becoming a rich one.

Q2: Will there be any fix patches?

A2: Yes. We've discovered some bugs, such as the battle backgrounds displaying the wrong background, and there are a few lines of dialogue fixed at the last minute to be replaced - these will be addressed in an upcoming patch called version 5.0.1. I am very sorry. Also, there are scenes where an easily understood form of the Player is shown in Xehanort's final battle and final reflections, but as it could be misinterpreted in a way I didn't intend, we will be updating how it is represented sometime next month too.

Q3: You said the mystery of why Xehanort went bald would be answered, but it ended up being unexpectedly straightforward.

A3: Yes, it wasn't really a very important issue, after all. It's just that people were wrongly theorizing that it fell out after many years, so I wanted to correct the record that he shaved it. It also wasn't important that the Queen of Hearts didn't remember Xehanort. That's just how she is.

O4: Several Emblem Heartless appeared in the worlds of DR. Timeline-wise, Emblem Heartless weren't first created until after KH, right?

A4: The reason Emblem Heartless appear in worlds of the past is an important part of the setting of "Missing-Link," so it will be explained in the future.

Q5: Who is the blue robed figure who appears in the DR epilogue?

A5: Someone who bears the heart of the Player from UX. Later the part where it talks about a "second life" will be withdrawn. And then, it will be about how after its final destruction, that heart will once again melt into the heart of another person.

Q6: Places called Scala ad Caelum appear in both DR and Missing-Link. Is it the same place?

A6: It is the same place. It looks different because it is a different time period: as per the "multi-tiered city" label, the city is structured in tiers, where new districts are built on top of the old ones.

Q7: The story didn't go so far as to show when Xehanort becomes completely devoted to the darkness. What of this?

A7: That's true. But, I feel I showed the circumstances that led him to the start of that dark road. I also got to do the part I wanted to show the most: the relationship between him and Eraqus. So, I think it's possible to guess what happened from there.

Q8: There were a lot of interesting characters among his classmates and upperclassmen. Can we look forward to seeing them again?

A8: There were a lot of characters which I am sad to restrict to one game, and characters who made their exits without getting to do much talking, which I was disappointed about. But, as mentioned above, I wasn't able to go deeper due to issues regarding size limitations. I feel very sorry about this. I think it would be very difficult for most of the characters to appear

again in a future game. But, there are some possibilities. I've also thought it could be good content to touch on in a book or something.

Q9: What did Master Odin mean at the end when he spoke of a "teacher" and a "cruel fate"?

A9: Master Odin himself once had a master who taught him, naturally. His master entrusted him with a certain duty - parts of this align with that of the blue robed figure. This will be revealed in detail in Missing-Link, which depicts a later period.

O10: Xehanort's motherly figure looked a lot like Skuld. Is it her?

A10: No, but she is connected to Skuld. Missing-Link is also a story about bloodlines, you see.

Q11: In this game, we learned about Xehanort's bloodline. What about Eraqus? Previously we learned he is descended from the very first master. Do the two share lineage?

A11: Sorry, but this is also a Missing-Link topic. I will say they don't have the same parents.

Q12: When can we next expect news on Missing-Link?

A12: CBT (Closed Beta Testing) is first, we are currently making preparations. I have to balance the time-frames of other titles, but first of all, we do plan to revive the KINGDOM HEARTS Union x Twitter account as a Missing-Link account, so please make sure to follow.

Q13: Lastly, will Xehanort appear again in a future title?

A13: The Dark Seeker Saga, which hinged on Xehanort, is now over. However, this doesn't have bearing on whether he will or won't appear. At this point, it's up to whether there's a good opportunity.

—Thank you.
KINGDOM HEARTS Series Director Tetsuya Nomura
2022/08/26

まずは長い間お待たせして申し訳ありませんでした。
もっとボリュームを増して詳細を語りたい部分もありましたが、
物理的に今回のボリュームが限界を超えていましたので必要最低限で強かせて頂きました。
「DARK ROAD」としては完結となりますし、ゲームプレイも含みますが、
バランスとしてはかなり遠び易く任意展開に調整しておりますので今作を楽しんで頂ければ幸いです。
そして今後も「Missing-Link」「KHIII」と物語は続いがありますのでさらなるご期待、楽しみください。

以下、今作の補足となるQ&Aを用意しましたので興味のある方は目を通して頂ければと思います。
※全てに物語ラストまでのネタバレを含みますのでネタバレの方はご注意下さい。

「KINGDOM HEARTS Union χ DARK ROAD」完結記念Q&A

Q1：過去作のHDでデスティニーアイランドから旅立ったゼアノートは青年の姿でしたが
「DX」ではそれより若い少年の姿になっていましたが？

A1：「DX」が正確な情報になります。過去作制作当時は青年の姿は用意していましたが
少年の姿はモデルコストを削減化していために用意がなく、
「若い頃」という一括りの表現にしていました。それを「DX」で詳細に分けたという形です。
表現が豊かになった、と捉えて頂ければ。

Q2：修正パッチが来るんでしょうか？

A2：はい。バトルの背景に違う背景が表示されているバグ等、一部バグが確認されていたり、
直前で修正した僅少な箇所のセリフが差し変わっていなかったり、
それらと共に後日バージョン1.0.1としてパッチを当てさせて頂きます。申し訳ありません。
また、ゼアノートの最後の戦いや、最後の回想で分かり易くプレイヤーの姿を出したシーンがありましたが、
意図しない解釈に誤解される可能性がある為、上記と共に本月中には該当箇所を修正させて頂きます。

Q3：ゼアノートのスキンヘッドの謎を明かすとの事でしたが、意外とあっさりとしていました

A3：はい、大して重要な問題ではない事だったので、ただ、長年抱けたのが近視として
誤解されている様だったので「言った」と正しておきたかっただけですね。
その他、ハートの女王がゼアノートを憶えていなかったのも大した問題ではありません。
そういう人だというだけです。

Q4：「DX」の世界にも「エンブレム」「ハートレス」が複数登場していました。
時系列的には「エンブレム」が造られたのは「DX」の後だと思うのですが？

A4：過去の世界に「エンブレム」が発生している原因は
「Missing-Link」の重要な設定となりますので今後語かります。

Q5：「DX」のエピローグの青いローブの人物は何者だったのでしょうか？

A5：「DX」のプレイヤーの心を宿した者です。「2度の人生」と語っていたのは今後回収されます。
そして最後の消滅でその心は再び任者の心に溶けた、という事になります。

Q6：「DX」で描かれた「スカラ・アド・カエルム」と「Missing-Link」で描かれる
「スカラ・アド・カエルム」は同じ場所なのでしょうか？

A6：同じ場所です。雰囲気が違って見えるのは「多層都市」と呼ばれている通り、
「スカラ・アド・カエルム」が古い街の上に新たな街を建設している多重構造なので、時代の違いになります。

Q7：ゼアノートが完全に闇に精神するところまでは描かれていませんでしたが？

A7：そうですね。ただ、彼が闇の道の入り口に立つきっかけは描けたかと思います。
また今作で一番描きたかったエラクゥスとの関係性等も描けたので、
その辺りから先を推察する事は出来るかと思います。

Q8：同級生や上級生にも気になるキャラクターが多かったですが、今後登場は期待出来るでしょうか？

A8：今作のみになるには惜しいキャラクターやは謂らないまま退場するキャラクターも
多く自分としても残念でしたし、前述通り今回のボリューム的に割り下げられず申し訳ないと思っています。
おそらくほとんどのキャラクターは今後の物語への登場は難しいですが、
一部可能性があったり、書籍等で触れられるといいなと思っていたりはします。

Q9：マスター・ウォーデンが最後で語った「新」と「酷な運命」とは？

A9：当然ウォーデンにも敵となるマスターがいました。
彼はある役命をマスターに託されていましたが、それは青いローブの人物と共通している部分があります。
詳しくは前の時代となる「Missing-Link」で明かされます。

Q10：ゼアノートの母親らしき女性がスカルドに似ていますが本人でしょうか？

A10：本人ではありませんがスカルドと関係はあります。「Missing-Link」は自縛の物語でもあるので。

Q11：今作でゼアノートの血縁が明かされましたがエラクゥスはどうでしょう？
以前、初代マスターの血縁と語られていましたが、2人は血縁関係なのでしょうか？

A11：それも申し訳ないですが「Missing-Link」でとなります。
ただ、同じ両親ではありません。

Q12：その「Missing-Link」の新情報はいつ頃になりそうでしょうか？

A12：まずはCBTとなりますが現在準備中です。他タイトルとの時期の兼ね合いもありますが、
一先ず「KINGDOM HEARTS Union χ」のアカウントが「Missing-Link」のアカウントに転生予定ですので、
フォローをよろしくお願いします。

Q13：最後に、ゼアノートは今後の作品には登場しないのでしょうか？

A13：ゼアノートを軸とした「ダークシーカー編」は完結していますが、
登場の有無とは関係ないと思っています。機会があれば、というところです。

ーありがとうございました。

「KINGDOM HEARTSシリーズディレクター 野村哲也」
2022/08/26

Arielle. (2022, August 27). *[SPOILER] KINGDOM HEARTS Union X DARK ROAD Completion Commemorative Q&A.* KHInsider. https://www.khinsider.com/news/-SPOILER-KINGDOM-HEARTS-Union-X-DARK-ROAD-Completion-Commemorative-Q-A-19299. [Archived: https://web.archive.org/web/20250720172604/https://www.khinsider.com/news/-SPOILER-KINGDOM-HEARTS-Union-X-DARK-ROAD-Completion-Commemorative-Q-A-19299].

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Otocoto Interview on the History of Kingdom Hearts' Approval

Archive Author's Note: Non-interview content such as introductions, closing remarks, or unrelated images may have been omitted. This entry includes only the translated interview material.
During a brief search for a full translation, a Google Document on the history of the devlopment and approval was found. As it has 30 pages and is already a separate document, it will not be included here, however, as it might be important for future research and includes sources, it can, therefore, be found here [archived].

—

Otocoto published an editorial piece by Shuji Utsumi, Entertainment Business Strategist for Otocoto and former VP/Managing Director for Asia Pacific at Disney Interactive in the 2000s, detailing the interesting history of how *Kingdom Hearts* was greenlit in the early 2000s by Michael Eisner, former Chairman and Chief Executive Officer of The Walt Disney Company. The article titled "Eisner's final word was the deciding factor for *Kingdom Hearts*" gives readers a rather colorful picture of how the game managed to get approved for official development.

When Utsumi joined Disney in 2000, he took on the task of getting *Kingdom Hearts* approved for development after learning the project was in full active development at SquareSoft despite never receiving any official approval to start the project. According to Utsumi, SquareSoft had no knowledge that the game wasn't even officially approved as they had only been in talks with Disney Japan at that point, and there was nobody at Disney Japan who could make those kinds of decisions.

There was very little hope that the project would be greenlit, and long-time staff at Disney Japan warned Utsumi that he should prepare to inform SquareSoft that the project was cancelled. Even so, Utsumi discussed things with other members of Disney, including his boss in the United States and the head of brand management, and had laid the groundwork with everybody to make sure *Kingdom Hearts* would get the greenlight. All that was left was getting it approved by Eisner.

Eisner and Bob Iger, who at the time was President and Chief Operating Officer of The Walt Disney Company, came to visit Japan to inspect Tokyo DisneySea and receive performance results from their Japan branch. It was during this meeting with Eisner and over 100 members

of management that Utsumi presented *Kingdom Hearts*. Eisner did not give any praise for the project, but instead gave Utsumi encouraging words to "keep at it, and do it right", which was as good as an approval.

Kingdom Hearts had been officially greenlit by Eisner.

Goldpanner has summarized the full article below:

- 2020 has been a critical year for both the video game industry and the Walt Disney Company (Disney).
- CEO of nearly 15 years Bob Iger stepped down in February 2020.
- He and the previous CEO Eisner (who had his seat for 20 years) made Disney what it is today after being on the brink of death in the mid 80s.
- In 2019 Disney made 40% of USA box office profit
- The author of this piece Shuji Utsumi was involved in Sony Computer Entertainment America, which brought the Playstation to the USA
- He then went to Sega, and then joined Disney in 2000 as VP/Managing Director for Asia Pacific for Disney Interactive where he had the experience of presenting to Eisner and Iger in person
- He explains the concept of KH - Disney and Square collab, set in Disney Worlds and includes Disney characters and Final Fantasy characters. The first KH game has sold 6 million units worldwide, with PS4 & Xbox One titles still releasing today.
- He made the presentation requesting formal approval for the first game to Eisner and Iger
- The experimental KH project began without Disney's authorization - which Square apparently wasn't aware of
- When he joined the company and was immediately told development was already busily underway he was extremely shocked
- First of all, Disney had never approved a license in Japan for a title with a completely new setting
- Second of all, Disney had never combined multiple franchises together into one title before
- There wasn't even a style guide for creating a 3D model of Mickey Mouse
- The reason nobody had gotten authorization was because there wasn't even anyone in Japan who had the authority to pass judgment on a project like this

- Some long-time Disney Japan staff told him that this didn't have a snowball's chance of being approved and advised him to take measures to cancel the project - at that point he never dreamed someday he'd present it to Eisner and get approval to create the product
- When he joined in the early 2000s Eisner's legendary grasp on the market was beginning to show cracks and business wasn't doing well internationally
- In Japan however they had just opened Disney Sea and were doing extremely well compared to other countries
- Eisner was visiting Japan for the first time in a while to inspect Disney Sea and hear performance reports
- Utsumi was surprised at how many people Eisner had in his entourage - having an entourage of people working alongside a company president of an old and or powerful company is usual in Japan too, but Eisner had about 100 members of management come with him to Japan
- The Division Managing Directors were in charge of giving the reports. He apparently stood out among the other presenters as his game division had very good results as well as ran Japan's first global Disney project
- On the day of the presentation, there were over 100 members of management from both Japan and the USA, but everyone was only focused on Eisner, who sat in a chair at the front and asked questions and gave instructions for each presentation
- The way everyone hung on his every word, waiting for him to speak or not, trying to read his mood, felt more like an old Japanese business meeting than a Western one
- Meetings at Disney with Eisner were completely different - Utsumi thought he was like an "Ancient Chinese Emperor"
- Utsumi worked the topic of the concerning Kingdom Hearts into his presentation that day
- He'd had many meetings with the other members beforehand, including his USA boss and the head of brand management, and had laid the groundwork with all related parties, which meant things went smoothly
- Eisner didn't especially have words of praise - he just said something encouraging like "keep at it, and do it right." But, the words of the Emperor have tremendous power - after the presentation many members of Disney's management as well as staff came to shake his hand with big smiles

- KH was a first as well as an experiment in many different areas which seemed poised to conflict with the company's creative brand rules
- Most of the management had been neutral, but Eisner's encouraging words blew away those anxieties and brand rule problems - everyone interpreted it as having received official permission

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KH 20th anniversary event Q&A masterpost

Archive Author's Note: Non-interview content such as introductions, closing remarks, or unrelated images may have been omitted. This entry includes only the translated interview material.

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Sources: @zexion0613, @loxas_xi, @aibo_ac7, @rhyme_monsta, @toro_cocoron0te, jyaco_juice

On KH4:

- Can't say much about the game right now. It was only shown early to avoid leaks, so there won't be any more news for a while. There won't be any news on KH at E3 either (Nomura is saying it now before people jump to conclusions all over the internet.)
- Everything you saw in the PV are rendered in real time in UE4. However, development is moving to UE5 so this footage is being discarded.
- When the team sent Nomura the video of the forest, he thought, "Why are you sending me live-action footage?"
- Takes place post-MoM, which is 1 year after Sora's disappearance in KH3.
- The visual style is a result of being in Quadratum.
- Donald and Goofy were shown at the end to assure everyone that Sora will still appear in the familiar KH style.
- World selection is currently in progress.
- The logo has changed because the Dark Seeker Saga has concluded. It was tough to settle on the new design.
- Nomura was torn between Verum Rex or KH4 for the next title, and discussed it with Yasue. In the end, he decided to prioritize KH4 because it'd be difficult to develop two big console games at the same time, and there were many fans who were worried about Sora.
- People tend to say "Verum Rex" with a short u like "veram" but the dev team actually pronounces it with a long u like "veroom" (ヴェラム vs ヴェルム, the latter is correct)
- The same actor provided the narration for both the ML and KH4 sections of the trailer. Nomura wouldn't reveal the identity of the character they play, only confirming that it's not Brain.

On Missing-Link:

- Nomura started working on it before UX concluded.

- Has action like in the mainline series
- Supports battles with up to 6 players
- Screen can be viewed in portrait or landscape mode
- Set during a blank time period between UX and DR
- A story that connects all of the mysteries up to now
- Key words: The Multi-Layered City of Scala ad Caelum, Founder Ephemer, Secret Society of Keyblade Wielders. Everything is connected.
- Beta testing is scheduled for Fall 2022
- There are two systems: one is a story mode where you advance through quests, and the other a walking mode like Pokemon Go.
- As fans can imagine, Nomura doesn't particularly like AR games. He also doesn't want to walk and knows players wouldn't be receptive to it either if it were required, so he made it possible to play the game in the comfort of your own home.
- There's a base from where you can go out into the world map and explore to collect "pieces," which can be set onto your Keyblade to enhance abilities.
- "Pieces" take the form of figurines, like what you see in the trailer when the player uses an ability.
- Start quests from the base and complete them to advance the story.
- Quests and world map are the two main components of the game.
- Nomura talks about dreaming of traveling to places that he'd like to visit but wasn't able to. He thinks it wouldn't be very KH-like if you aren't able to go wherever you wanted and are instead limited by how far you can walk.

On Dark Road:

- Final chapter is scheduled to be released in August 2022.
- The UXDR team has already disbanded. As a result, they can no longer do periodic updates and must release everything all at once.
- The current work on DR is being done by the two animators who worked on the UX event scenes (Reminder that the second animator was only hired in the final year of UX's service.)
- A number of improvements have been made.
- Resolves various mysteries up to now.
- It took a lot of work to recreate the chess scene for DR.
- There were many tough hurdles for D-san (Disney?)

Misc. Comments:

- Nomura didn't finish the anniversary artwork until 10:00am this morning. He stayed up all night to get it done in time.
- Asked Hazama to help him buy some shampoo but he didn't make it in time before the event started so here we are.
- Is exhausted by rehearsal.
- Nomura was burnt out after KH3.
- He realizes that he's really been recognized in these 20 years. Back when the first game released, he wasn't very well known. Now that the series has become much more prolific, he doesn't have as much freedom as they used to, but his development ideology hasn't changed.
- KH3 has sold a record high of 6.7 million units as of September 2021.
- Nomura reminisces about his school days, when he lived only 5 minutes away from the ocean. He's inserted some of his own life experiences into the games, such as spending time eating ice cream with friends.
- He isn't very good at action games, but tries to be conscious that KH can be played by everyone.
- He's not keen on too much fantasy. Instead, he prefers something inbetween reality and fantasy, with just a little bit out of touch with reality.
- Nomura wants to convey two key points in KH: that our hearts are connected, and anyone can be the hero.
- Sora may be gone, but his heart is still connected to others.
- First started work on KH in 1997.
- They've given out all of the information they can right now. Perhaps the next time Nomura appears in-person will be on the 25th anniversary?

— Regarding superbosses.

Hazama: Sephiroth was terrible. I could barely even hear the One-Winged Angel playing in the background as Sora floated around in the air (laughs).

Nomura: Isn't it hilarious though? To be so thoroughly beaten out of nowhere. I can't defeat them myself, but it's fun to see someone else losing like that (laughs)

— Regarding the lack of livestream.

Nomura: When you're livestreaming something, there's a lot of work that goes into making it available for the overseas audience, subtitling it, and having to adhere to a script. Then I

might inadvertently leak some undisclosed information, in which case I'd say "Boy am I glad we didn't livestream this (laughs)."

Hazama: So says the one always getting angry about it...

— Are Nobody emblems natural? Do humanoid Nobodies have them?

Nomura: Is this something you all care about? (laughs) No, the humanoid Nobodies don't have them. Think of them as the Nobody equivalent of a Pureblood Heartless, they all lack emblems.

— Who exactly is Demyx?

Nomura: This question was asked a lot. I'm going to withhold the answer because if I reveal it here, then there'd be no point in showing it in a future game, and I'd rather save it. He's the only character in Organization XIII who is still shrouded in mystery, so I am thinking of touching upon it someday.

— Hikaru Utada is in charge of the theme songs throughout the series. Do you draw any inspiration from her work?

Nomura: Always. When it comes to the Kingdom Hearts series, I only start thinking about the opening movie after I receive her songs. I work on it with them in mind, so they're indispensible.

— At the end of UX, the Player melts into Xehanort's heart. Were they inside him the whole time?

Nomura: This will become clear when you play Dark Road. Please look forward to it.

— Riku hands Kairi a Keyblade in Kingdom Hearts 2, but where did he get it? Are there any plans to show how that happened?

Nomura: This would be another one of those questions that I can't show if I tell you the answer (laughs). I'll try to follow up on it somehow, otherwise it'll just go to waste.

— The story diverges based on who wins or loses the battle against Yozora, which I believe is a first for the KH series. What is the significance of this?

Nomura: There isn't any. Yozora is a very powerful foe and therefore difficult to beat, so I thought it'd be better if players could see something even if they lost the battle. It'd be upsetting for those who couldn't defeat him no matter how hard they tried, and receive nothing for their efforts.

— Did Ephemer realize the Player's true intentions in UX's ending?

Nomura: It's a sad goodbye, but there's still a lot to be said about Ephemer, so I will refrain from answering. However, past stories will be resolved in Missing-Link, so be sure to check it out.

— When did Namine and Ansem meet?

Nomura: When there was no one else left in Castle Oblivion. Organization XIII had been eliminated, and Sora and Riku were gone, so they were like "Well now what we do?" (laughs)

Hazama: It wasn't that amicable, was it? (laughs)

Nomura: It wasn't. I didn't show it because I thought people would be able to figure out what happened on their own.

— Why did Riku's hair get cut in KH3D?

Nomura: Everyone kept saying that his hair is too long in KH2 and that he should cut it off, so off it went (laughs)

— While we're on the topic, is there anything else you've changed in response to fan feedback?

Nomura: Roxas and Xion's return in Kingdom Hearts 3. I was struggling with the issue until the very last minute, and even considered a scenario where they wouldn't be revived at all. However, everyone's feelings were so strong that I felt I had no choice to bring them back.

There are parts of the story that I won't budge on, but when I'm having trouble, I will consider what everyone is saying.

— How do you read the "world of ※" that the Master of Masters tried to disappear to? Is the ※ a hidden character?

Nomura: It is. The name was written properly in the script. We're keeping it under wraps for the time being, but you'll find out eventually. However, if you have a good sense, you might be able to figure it out on your own.

— When and how did Isa receive the scar on his face? Also, why is it in the form of the Recusant's Sigil?

Nomura: Good question. There's a story with Lea and Isa and the girl they were trying to rescue. Stay tuned for the future.

— Why was there noise in the sky after Ephemer and Skuld left the data world in UX?

Nomura: There's no deeper meaning to this. It's just an effect.

Hazama: People tend to misunderstand this kind of thing.

— Master Xehanort hijacked Terra's body to see what lies beyond the Keyblade War, but it seems like Young Xehanort was already pretty powerful. So why didn't he do anything about it while he was still young?

Nomura: Because he didn't have the power to do so. Not enough.

As for Xehanort himself, the mysteries surrounding him will be revealed in the final chapter of DR. You'll also find out why Xehanort's hair became the way it did.

— What is the difference between falling to darkness (as happened to Riku and Aqua) and becoming Heartless and creating Nobodies?

Nomura: Falling to darkness and losing your heart to it are two different phenomena. When the heart falls to darkness, it still remains with you, but when it becomes a Heartless, the heart departs the body.

Dark Aqua is pretty cool and I like her a lot, so I wanted to show her a little more.

— You mentioned that the reason why Maleficent believes the black box contains the Book of Prophecies would be revealed in UX, but are there any plans to elaborate on that in the future?

Nomura: The scenes with Darkness and Maleficent in UX hinted at the reason, even thought it wasn't explicitely revealed. Since it wasn't clear to everyone, I think I'll have Maleficent talk about it sooner or later.

— In KH3, Xemnas breaks Lea's Keyblade and says "Your Keyblade is no more," yet Lea continues to use it regardless.

Nomura: There were a lot of these kinds of retorts. It doesn't mean that Lea's Keyblade is gone for good, since Xemnas does not have the power to do that. The nuance is that Xemnas has destroyed it on the spot, sending a message to Lea that even if he were to summon his Keyblade again, the same thing would happen. He's got a Keyblade now, but he can't use it.

VA Talk Session:

Thoughts on their auditions:

- At the time, both Miyu Irino (Sora/Vanitas) and Risa Uchida (Kairi/Xion) were in middle school.
- Uchida performed a line for a scene in Destiny Islands for her audition. She lived near the ocean at the time, and read her line while thinking of those familiar views. She auditioned because of her love of the ocean.

- Miyu Irino doesn't remember his audition and jokes that it's just like Sora to not remember anything.
- Yoji Shimizu (sound director) recalls his first impression of the two, saying that they were 13 and 14 year olds without fear, just like Sora and Kairi. That quality, along with the similarities in ages with the characters, contributed to their casting.
- His first impression of KH was of original characters and Disney characters existing on the same screen and having conversations with each other. The frequent interaction between characters from completely different worlds and cultures "almost made him faint" when he first heard about it, but as he proceeded to work on the project, he realized just how interesting it was.
- Shimizu oversees the recording of around 100-150 characters per KH game.

Mamoru Miyano's (Riku) video message:

- KH is the work that made him who he is, taught him the joy of being a voice actor, and was a chance for him to make himself known to the world.
- He recalls working part-time at a bookstore when the Ultimania was released, and convincing the owner to let him display the book prominently in the shop.
- Says he was happy to perform with Uchida on stage.
- His two favorite lines are "Giving up already? Come on, Sora. I thought you were stronger than that." which he'd often say to his friends in private, and "Having you for a friend." as they express Riku well.
- Would love to see another title where you can play as Riku.
- Shimizu's first impression of Miyano was that he was a bit troubled and skeptical of the world at times, making him best suited for the role of Riku. Irino and Uchida, on the other hand, said they were doing it with the thought of having fun.
- It's precisely because they have the same personalities as their characters and have such great rapport that they've been able to get along with each other for over than 20 years.
- Irino comments that Miyano is "the one who will always play the leading role."

Impressive dialogue:

- Irino on Sora: "My friends are my power."
- He remembers struggling to record "I've been having these weird thoughts lately" for KH3.
- Uchida on Kairi: "Don’t ever forget. Wherever you go, I’m always with you."

- Uchida on Xion: "You're both my best friends."

Thoughts on Roxas: "My summer vacation... is over."

- Irino: "I had a friend who loves Roxas and would often say that line to me, because I'm Sora."
- Shimizu recalls an interesting episode where he noticed something in common between Irino and Koki Uchiyama (Roxas). According to him, many children would turn fearfully to look at the teacher's face when they make a mistake or perform poorly, but these two are the only ones who have never done so since they were kids. Rather than worrying about how the adults would react, they kicked themselves for not being able to do it. Considering Roxas is Sora's alter ego, he finds it interesting that their two actors share such similarities.
- Irino is the intuitive type, while Uchiyama tends to worry. Shimizu remembers Uchiyama struggling to grasp Ven.

Thoughts on Axel: "Go on, you just keep running. But I'll always be there to bring you back!"

- Shimizu got goosebumps during recording of the aforementioned line. His job requires him to be objective so he tries to not get too absorbed, but this one time, he was very moved by Fujiwara's performance.
- Fujiwara once had to do 70 takes for a certain line of dialogue, but did it without a sour look on his face. Shimizu is very grateful to him.
- Nomura: "When I talk about Axel, I feel sad."

Message from Hikaru Utada:

- It's difficult to write both Japanese and English versions, but it's a special task.
- "I'm not good at games, but I've got a copy [of KH] and would like to play it with my son when he's old enough. He said he was thinking of trying it."

Closing remarks by Shinji Hashimoto:

"I think back to all those times myself, director Nomura, and others would travel to the U.S. to give presentations, have meetings, sign contracts, and climb stairs, and before I knew it, it'd been 20 years. I'm truly happy that we were able to pass the baton to the next generation, and that [KH] has become a work loved by people all around the world. I believe the world of KH will continue to expand with KH4 at the forefront, so I'd like to ask for your continued support in the future. Thank you you all very much."

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YoungJump Interview

Original Article: https://youngjump.jp/yj45_interview/02/

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Q1: The Kingdom Hearts series has many intricate settings and characters. How do you consolidate these and communicate them to the team?

I don't think the team fully understands everything. For example, during recordings, sometimes the staff explaining the settings or characters to the voice actors will ask me, “This is correct, right?” and I might respond, “No, not quite.” This kind of back-and-forth happens (laughs). However, it’s understandable because I’m the only one who knows the parts of the characters that haven't been depicted yet. I personally navigate through the complex storylines, constantly swaying between different directions. On the other hand, I encourage the team to question or point out anything to me.

Q2: Do you have a sort of "bible" or documentation for the settings?

I do have personal notes to ensure I don't forget things. These include the footsteps of important characters, events that haven't been depicted yet, and future developments.

Q3: So, these aren’t shared with the team?

No, I keep them a secret (laughs). But when necessary, I sometimes write sudden bursts of detailed settings into the script to make sure the staff understands.

Q4: In Kingdom Hearts, you seem to lay out foreshadowing that spans multiple installments. How do you keep track of everything?

A lot of it is written in my notes, but I also rely on the staff to remember things. Since I enjoy watching videos, I sometimes check gameplay footage and fan theories on YouTube. Rather than relying on my notes, I often ask the staff how things played out in previous titles.

Q5: Do you watch fan theory videos? Do you ever think, “They’ve figured it out, so I’ll change it,” or “They don’t get it at all”?

I find them genuinely interesting to watch. Often, I think, “It’s not as complicated as people think.” I’m frequently impressed by how deeply people analyze things. For instance, some people try to connect Kingdom Hearts to the Final Fantasy series, but the writers for each are different, and even though I’m involved with both, there’s no connection between the titles.

Q6: At the time of the first Kingdom Hearts, I assume you didn't have the entire current storyline planned. As the series progresses and more settings and characters are introduced, does it become increasingly difficult to maintain coherence? Do you mostly make things up as you go?

I had a general direction from the first game. As I mentioned earlier, I do take notes on future developments. When things don't quite align with the planned direction, I make adjustments on the fly. While the details weren't fully fleshed out at the time of Kingdom Hearts I (released in 2002), I had thought about the next few installments ahead of time. So, while we were working on Kingdom Hearts III (released in 2019), I already had Kingdom Hearts IV and beyond in mind and worked toward that.

Q7: This year, Kingdom Hearts: Missing-Link, a mobile app, is also set for release. With important story elements being released on mobile or handheld devices, are you concerned that some players may lose track of the storyline?

Yes, that is a concern (laughs). That's why Missing-Link takes place in a much earlier timeline than the main Kingdom Hearts series. However, as fans often joke, "Even though Kingdom Hearts IV is coming out, it's really more like Kingdom Hearts XIII" since the non-numbered titles are obviously connected. Still, I believe it allows for a deeper enjoyment of the Kingdom Hearts universe. That said, both Missing-Link and Kingdom Hearts IV are being designed with a strong emphasis on being standalone titles rather than just sequels. For instance, a new approach in the scenario writing is that I've had staff members who haven't been involved in Kingdom Hearts before join the writing process. Of course, I'll make final adjustments, but the base script was written by people unfamiliar with the series, which is why I don't think these projects will feel like obligatory follow-ups. With Missing-Link, we're addressing "the lost history," so the expectation is that not knowing everything is part of the experience. If you know the lore, it's more enjoyable, but it's not a prerequisite.

Q8: Much like how starting a long-running manga series can be daunting, the large number of Kingdom Hearts titles poses a similar challenge. How do you plan to attract new users?

I'd love to know the answer to that (laughs). As I mentioned earlier, Missing-Link and Kingdom Hearts IV are kind of reset points for me. I felt like Kingdom Hearts III was a

natural conclusion of sorts, so we're resetting things by bringing in new writers and even redesigning the logo to make the series more accessible.

Q9: So, that's why the logo changed.

If you've seen the ending of Kingdom Hearts III, you'll understand, but the way Sora's story ended was a way to reset things, so Kingdom Hearts IV should be more accessible than previous titles. Of course, longtime fans will recognize the familiar feel of the series, but we're designing it to be approachable for newcomers as well.

Q10: In a past interview, you mentioned that players would spend a lot of time in "Quadratum" (a field resembling Shibuya) in Kingdom Hearts IV. Why bring in a more realistic setting to a world that was previously pure fantasy?

There are a few reasons, but I personally like settings that are slightly removed from reality rather than being completely fantastical. It's the same with films—I find it harder to get immersed in worlds that are entirely fictional with no connection to reality. That's why Quadratum is based on Shibuya but isn't the real Shibuya. I'm fascinated by the idea of a slightly off-kilter version of reality, rather than a pure fantasy world.

Q11: Manga like Tokyo Ghoul, set in Tokyo, and Jujutsu Kaisen, with its Shibuya arc, are similar in that they use real-world locations. Perhaps fans of both manga and games enjoy these grounded yet fantastical settings.

That might be true. It's easier to relate to. Additionally, I've always thought there were plenty of creators already doing medieval high fantasy, so I didn't need to. In 2007, we released The World Ends with You, which was also set in Shibuya, but now many works use Shibuya as a setting. It feels like everyone has come to Shibuya (laughs).

Q12: It does seem like more works are set in Japan these days. Speaking of the mix between reality and fantasy, at the beginning of Kingdom Hearts, there's a monologue where Sora says, "I've been having these weird thoughts lately… Like, is any of this for real or not?" Did you already have Quadratum in mind back then?

The name "Quadratum" didn't exist at that time, but I had the concept in mind. It was a long-term plan that I knew we would eventually reach (laughs).

Q13: So it's a 20-year-long payoff for that foreshadowing. Lastly, do you see the ending of the Kingdom Hearts series in the future?

To give you a realistic answer, I'm approaching retirement age, so it's becoming a race between retirement and finishing the series (laughs). However, I am creating Kingdom Hearts IV with the intent of leading toward the series' conclusion.

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https://web.archive.org/web/20250720175303/https://www.khinsider.com/forums/index.php?threads/when-are-we-expecting-news-edit-reset-after-1-131-days-back-to-waiting-yall.238707/page-167#post-6668285].

Additional Resources

All the *Kingdom Hearts* Ultimanias (in Japanese) up to *Kingdom Hearts III Ultimania*: https://archive.org/details/KHUltimania. (as of: 2025, July 17)

Version History

Date	Information

2025, July 16	created archive
	added sections:
	• Table of Contents
	• Preface
	• Kingdom Hearts Ultimania
	  ○ Nomura Interview (Parts 1 to 4)
	  ■ Part 1: Project and Character (pg. 528-531)
	  ■ Part 2: Sound and Naming (pg. 528-531)
	  ■ Part 3: Kingdom Heart's Scenario Mysteries (pg 531-533)
	  ■ Part [4]: Secret and Message sections (pg. 533-535)
	  ○ A Look Back: KINGDOM HEARTS Ultimania Gallery Comments Part
	• Kingdom Hearts Chain of Memories Ultimania
	  ○ Nomura Interview
	  ○ A Look Back: CoM Ultimania - System Team & Graphic Team Interview
	  ○ A Look Back: CoM Ultimania - Scenario & Graphic Team Interview
	• Kingdom Hearts II Ultimania
	  ○ Kingdom Hearts II Ultimania Main Nomura Interview
	  ○ Kingdom Hearts II Scenario Mysteries
	  ○ A Look Back: KH2 Ultimania, Nojima Interview
	  ○ A Look Back: KH2 Ultimania, Event & Movie Team Interview
	  ○ A Look Back: KH2 Ultimania, Sound Team Interview
	  ○ A Look Back: KH2 Ultimania, Battle Team Interview
	• Kingdom Hearts II Final Mix+ Ultimania

	○ Kingdom Hearts II Final Mix+ Main Nomura Interview ○ Kingdom Hearts II Final Mix+ Scenario Mysteries ○ A Look Back: Director's Secret Report XIII ● Kingdom Hearts Character Reports ○ Character's Report Vol. 1 Translations ○ Character's Report Vol. 2 Translations ● Sources
2025, July 17	revised: Preface added: ● author's notes ● Kingdom Hearts 358/2 Days Ultimania ○ Kingdom Hearts 358/2 Days Ultimania - Timeline ○ 358/2 Days Ultimania - Main Nomura Interview ○ 358/2 Days Scenario Interview ○ Kingdom Hearts 358/2 Days Ultimania Birth by Sleep Speculation ● Kingdom Hearts 358/2 Days Interview ○ New Famitsu Interview with Tetsuya Nomura! ● Kingdom Hearts Birth By Sleep Ultimania ○ Full Nomura Interview + 20 KH Mysteries Solved! ○ Birth by Sleep [Plot/Scenario Mysteries Interview] ○ BBS Ultimania - 20 Mysteries Solved! ● Kingdom Hearts Re:Coded Ultimania ○ Re:coded Ultimania Director Interview & Scans! ○ Re:coded Ultimania Scenario Mysteries Interview Translated! ● Kingdom Hearts Dream Drop Distance Ultimania ○ KH3D Ultimania Interviews Translated! ■ Main Nomura Interview ■ Scenario Mysteries ● Kingdom Hearts Dream Drop Distance Interview ○ KH3D Famitsu Weekly Interview Translated!

	• Kingdom Hearts Series Memorial Ultimania
	  ○ Kingdom Hearts: The Xehanort Timeline
	  ○ [Series Lore:] Information from the Kingdom Hearts Series Memorial Ultimania translated
	• Additional Resources
	• Versions
	• To-Do

2025, July 18	Added more notes to the To-Do section Renamed "Versions" to "Version History"
2025, July 19	Added Kingdom Hearts III Ultimania section: • Kingdom Hearts 3 Ultimania - Main Nomura Interview Translated • Kingdom Hearts 3 Ultimania - Yasue Interview Translated • Kingdom Hearts 3 Ultimania - Scenario Mysteries Interview Translated • KH3 Ultimania translations, Pt.1 • Kingdom Hearts 3 Ultimania - Voice Actor Interview Translated Renamed "To-Do" to "Roadmap" • Added version progression Fixed a link for the image of the Kingdom Hearts: The Xehanort Timeline

2025, July 20	• Renamed most headings for clearity (usually shortened the title of the blog/forum entry; e.g. "~~A Look Back: KH2 Ultimania,~~ Nojima Interview)
	• Added more subsections to the Kingdom Hearts III Ultimania
	  ○ Gallery Comments Part 2
	  ○ -World of Tres- Interview: Nomura & Shimomura
	• Renamed "Sources" to "References" for clarity
	• Added references for Kingdom Hearts III Re Mind Interviews
	• Added a note and footnote to: Famitsu Weekly Interview with with Tetsuya Nomura
	• Renamed "Kingdom Hearts IV & Missing-Link Ínterviews" to "Kingdom Hearts IV Interviews"

	• Renamed “Other” to “Other Interviews”
	• Added references to
	  ○ Kingdom Hearts Mobile Games
	  ○ Other Interviews
	  ○ Kingdom Heart IV
	  ○ Kingdom Hearts Melody of Memories
	• Added sections:
	  ○ Kingdom Hearts III Re Mind Interviews
	  ■ Famitsu Interview with Tetsuya Nomura
	  ■ Tai Yasue talks about Kingdom Hearts III Re Mind in Twitter Q&A
	  ■ Nomura discusses Kingdom Hearts 3 Re Mind, new teams and future projects in Twitter Q&A
	  ■ PS Blog: Square Enix interviews Nomura on Kingdom Hearts 3
	  ■ Nomura discusses KH3 ReMind, Dark Road, future developments in final issue of Dengeki Playstation
	  ○ Kingdom Hearts Melody of Memories Interviews
	  ■ Game Informer Interview with Hazama, Suzui, and Nomura
	  ■ PlayStation Blog Japan Interview with Hazama, Nomura & Suzui
	  ■ Famitsu Interview
	  ■ Gamekult Interview with Hazama, Nomura & Suzui
	  ■ Famitsu interview with Melody of Memory staff
	  ■ Playstation Japan Interview
	  ■ Dengeki and 4Gamer Interviews
	  ■ Dengeki KHMOM Interview
	  ○ Kingdom Hearts IV Interviews
	  ■ Famitsu interviews Nomura on Kingdom Hearts 4

	and Missing-Link ■ Famitsu Interview ■ Game Informer Interview
2025, July 21 v1.0	● Added sections: ○ Kingdom Hearts Mobile Games Interviews ■ KHX/Unchained X/Back Cover Interviews ■ Union X DARK ROAD Completion Commemorative Q&A ○ Other Interviews ■ Otocoto Interview on the History of Kingdom Hearts' Approval ■ KH 20th anniversary event Q&A masterpost ■ YoungJump Interview ● Formatted many parts of the document: ○ Added new author's notes ○ omitted: irrelevant introductions, closing remarks, and images
2025, July 22 v1.1	● Add links for each section referring to: ○ the top of the document (Return to Top) ○ the top of the current section (Return to Section) ○ later entries (e.g. KH Gallery Part 1 → Part 2)

Roadmap

v1.0 Progression ✅

Goal: Add all interviews from the Reddit comment (Kingdom Hearts I to Missing-Link)

Subgoals	Date	Done
Kingdom Hearts Ultimania	2025, July 16	✅
Kingdom Hearts Chain of Memories Ultimania	2025, July 16	✅
Kingdom Hearts II Ultimania	2025, July 16	✅
Kingdom Hearts II Final Mix+ Ultimania	2025, July 16	✅
Kingdom Hearts Character Reports	2025, July 16	✅
Kingdom Hearts 358/2 Days Ultimania	2025, July 17	✅
Kingdom Hearts 358/2 Days Interview	2025, July 17	✅
Kingdom Hearts Birth By Sleep Ultimania	2025, July 17	✅
Kingdom Hearts Re:Coded Ultimania	2025, July 17	✅
Kingdom Hearts Dream Drop Distance Ultimania	2025, July 17	✅
Kingdom Hearts Dream Drop Distance Interview	2025, July 17	✅
Kingdom Hearts Series Memorial Ultimania	2025, July 17	✅
Kingdom Hearts III Ultimania	2025, July 19 2025, July 20	✅
Kingdom Hearts III Re Mind Interviews	2025, July 20	✅
Kingdom Hearts Melody of Memories Interviews	2025, July 20	✅
Kingdom Hearts IV Interviews	2025, July 20	✅
Kingdom Hearts Mobile Games Interviews	2025, July 21	✅

Other interviews	2025, July 21	✅
References	2025, July 16 - 2025, July 20	✅

- Conversion to PDF ✅

v1.1 Progression ✅

Goal: Improve navigation within the document

- Add links for each section referring to:
  - the top of the document (Return to Top) ✅
  - the top of the current section (Return to Section) ✅
  - later entries (e.g. KH Gallery Part 1 → Part 2) ✅

v1.2 Progression

Goal: Add metadata for each interview (for citation and traceability)

Subgoals	Date	Done
Kingdom Hearts Ultimania		❌
Kingdom Hearts Chain of Memories Ultimania		❌
Kingdom Hearts II Ultimania		❌
Kingdom Hearts II Final Mix+ Ultimania		❌
Kingdom Hearts Character Reports		❌
Kingdom Hearts 358/2 Days Ultimania		❌
Kingdom Hearts 358/2 Days Interview		❌
Kingdom Hearts Birth By Sleep Ultimania		❌
Kingdom Hearts Re:Coded Ultimania		❌
Kingdom Hearts Dream Drop Distance Ultimania		❌

Kingdom Hearts Dream Drop Distance Interview		❌
Kingdom Hearts Series Memorial Ultimania		❌
Kingdom Hearts III Ultimania		❌
Kingdom Hearts III Re Mind Interviews		❌
Kingdom Hearts Melody of Memories Interviews		❌
Kingdom Hearts IV		❌
Kingdom Hearts Mobile Games Interviews		❌
Other interviews		❌

v1.3 Progression

Goal: Improve searchability and usability

- Add key terms for searchability

v1.4 Progression

- Add Forword
- Add Author's Note
- Add credit list for translators

v2.0 Progression

- Conversion to PDF
- Add contact form

Future Plans Progression

- Add page numbers if possible
- Add original (Japanese) interviews?
- Add Fan Theories?
- Add interviews with translators? (Oral History section)
- Let people add translation (foot)notes?

Goal: Add reports from the games

Subgoals	Date	Done

Kingdom Hearts: Ansem Reports		❌
Kingdom Hearts II: Secret Ansem Reports		❌
Kingdom Hearts 358/2 Days: Secret Reports		❌
Kingdom Hearts Birth by Sleep: Xehanort Reports		❌
Kingdom Hearts Dream Drop Distance: Glossaries		❌

Metadata template

Title:

Original Source:

Date:

Translation by:

Translation URL (archived):

Notes: